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THE TIMES OF INDIA

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INDIA'S LARGEST ENGLISH NEWSPAPER

Heartbreak as Lakshya Sen finishes runner-up in All England Open after going down 15-21, 20-22 to Lin Chun-Yi of Chinese Taipei P 18

Threemendous: T20 Kings Keep The Crown

■ First Defending Champs To Retain Title ■ First Hosts To Win Trophy ■ First Team To Win Three T20 WCs

TEAM TOI

On the day that the 2026 T20 World Cup schedule was unveiled, Indian skipper Suryakumar Yadav was asked his dream matchup for the tournament. The answer came without a flicker of hesitation. "Australia in the final, at the Narendra Modi Stadium."

The Men in Blue have won many matches and tournaments since that heartbreaking loss in the ODI World Cup final in Nov 2023, but the wounds had clearly still not fully healed for Surya — as they hadn't for so many fans.

Surya didn't get the opponent he craved, but he won't complain. Nor will the Indian supporters who screamed themselves hoarse — in the stadium and in front of millions of flickering screens, big and small, across the world. On a glorious Sunday night, Team India achieved redemption, and it has rarely tasted sweeter. India didn't so much win the title as stroll to it. It was a coronation rather than a final.

FULL COVERAGE: P 16, 17, 18, Edit

History, that most stubborn of scorekeepers, was rewritten in bold strokes. No defending champion had ever retained a T20 World Cup. No host nation had survived the suffocating weight of home expectation. No team had lifted the World Cup in this most fickle of formats three times. Check. Check. And emphatically, check.

Abhishek Sharma, quiet through much of the tournament, chose the grandest stage to announce himself. He blazed to 50 off 18 balls, the quickest half-century in this tournament and the fastest ever in a T20 WC knockout match. The impetus propelled India to 92/0 in the powerplay, the highest of this WC and the joint-highest in all WCs. New Zealand had put India in, backing themselves to chase on a batting-friendly track. But their gamble — and the strange decision to leave out offspinner Cole McConchie against a line-up packed with left-handers — backfired as India proceeded to bat them out of the match.

Sharma fell chasing a wide one, but Sanju Samson and Ishan Kishan ensured the scoring rate didn't slacken. Samson, in the midst of the purplest of patches, became only the third player to score 50s in both the semifinal and final of a T20 WC, following Shahid Afridi in 2009 and Virat Kohli in 2014. He also became only the second player in T20 WCs to score three 80-plus scores in a row, after Mahela Jayawardene in 2010. It's an elite club, but on his current form, there can be no doubt that Samson truly belongs with these bonafide T20 legends.

The player of the tournament award was fitting reward, and completed the fairytale for a player who wasn't even in India's first choice XI when the WC began.

In the 14th over, he launched Rachin Ravindra for three successive sixes. With that assault, India became the first team to hit 100 sixes in a single edition of a World Cup. Samson fell short of a hundred for the third straight match, but for the third straight match he was India's lodestar, shaping the contest to his will.

Ishan Kishan hammered 54 off 25 balls, making it the first time in a T20 WC knockout that the top 3 had all scored 50s. India surged to 203/1 in 15 overs, and 300 seemed to be within reach.

Three quick wickets fell in the 16th over, briefly applying the brakes. But Shivam Dube hit 26 not out from 8 balls to push India to 255/5, the third-highest total in T20 WC history and the highest target ever set in a final. It was 15 more than India had managed in the 2023 ODI final — off 50 overs.

England had come close to ascending a similar mountain just three nights ago. NZ, too, bat deep and carry plenty of firepower in their ranks. But this time, there was a feeling that the stars were firmly aligned in India's favour.

Axar Patel and Jasprit Bumrah, playing in front of an adoring home crowd, made sure of it. They tore through the top order as NZ staggered to 47/3. Varun Chakravarthy again copped a hammering, but hit back to dismiss Tim Seifert for 52 off 26 balls.

Kiwi captain Mitchell Santner hit some lusty blows to score 43 off 35 balls. But by then, it was just a question of delaying the inevitable — and the celebrations. Santner was finally bowled by Bumrah, who finished the night with a career-best T20I haul of 4/15 and a tournament haul of 14 wickets (joint-highest with Varun). For the record, India won by 96 runs. But the match had ended as a contest long before the last ball was bowled.

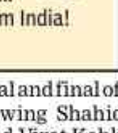
Photos: Yogesh Chawda

STUNNING STATS

50 off 18 balls by Abhishek Sharma the quickest half-century in this tournament and also the fastest in a T20 WC knockout match

92/0 India's powerplay score the highest of this T20 WC and the joint-highest in all WCs

106 sixes hit by India in 2026 a record for **most maximums in a World Cup.** Sanju Samson alone hit 24 sixes in 5 matches, the most by a player in a single WC



This remarkable triumph reflects exceptional skills, determination and teamwork... Well done, Team India!
—PM Modi

Feels extremely special because I've played one final at my home venue but couldn't win that one, but today I won. The wicket was flat so I had to use all my experience —**Jasprit Bumrah** | PLAYER OF THE MATCH

I was broken, dreams shattered... But God had different plans... I was rewarded for being brave enough to dream... Last couple of months, I have been in constant contact with Sachin (Tendulkar) sir —**Sanju Samson** | PLAYER OF THE TOURNAMENT

It'll take a little bit of time to sink in but definitely very happy. Been a long journey, started post 2024 WC...We just wanted to follow the good cricketing habits that we had in 2024
—**Suryakumar Yadav** | INDIA CAPTAIN

INDIA'S MARCH TO GLORY & THE MEN WHO MATTERED

The route to the World Cup was littered with obstacles and hazards. Fortunately for India, every time it faced a crunch situation, a player stood up and produced a match-winning performance

SURYAKUMAR YADAV vs US (84 n.o off 49 balls): India were reeling at 77/6 in the opening match and there was real concern that the US would pull off a massive upset before the skipper stepped in to steady the ship. Dropped on 17 off 15 balls, Surya smashed 48 off the last 18 balls he faced — including 21 off the last over — to haul India to 161/9, and a comfortable 29-run victory

ISHAN KISHAN vs Pak (77 off 40 balls): In a match in which every batter struggled to raise the tempo, Kishan batted as though he was playing on another pitch. His explosive knock propelled India to 88/1 in 8.3 overs before he was dismissed. India slowed dramatically thereafter, but the momentum given by Kishan meant they still reached 175/7 — more than enough as Pak crumbled to 114 all out

TILAK VARMA (44 n.o off 16 balls vs Zimbabwe): Smarting from a 76-run hammering by South Africa, India rejigged their batting order and came out all guns firing. Every batter scored at a strike rate of over 150, but Varma provided the icing on the cake, taking to his new role of finisher with gusto as India galloped to 256/4, their highest score in T20 World Cups

SANJU SAMSON (97 n.o off 50 balls vs West Indies): In a virtual quarterfinal, Samson played an unforgettable innings, displaying composure and silken strokemaking to guide India to their highest run chase ever in a T20 WC game

AXAR PATEL vs England: Samson played another blinder (89 off 42) in the semis and Bumrah (1/33) produced a T20 bowling masterclass. But the biggest impact arguably came from the vice-captain, who bowled Tom Banton, took two catches — including a superb dismissal of English skipper Harry Brook — and produced a moment of sheer genius, racing to grab the ball, then flipping it to Shivam Dube as he hurtled over the ropes, to get rid of Will Jacks

WE JUST WITNESSED WHAT A BILLION DREAMS CAN DO. CONGRATS, TEAM INDIA!

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO TURNED OUR CREAM COOKIE INTO A DREAM COOKIE.

OREO DREAM FOR THE TEAM

Creative Visualization. The names and references to cricketers in this representation are user generated and are used solely for identifying the players who played on behalf of various teams in the Cricket World Cup 2026. Mondelez India Foods Pvt. Ltd. and/or the Brand "Oreo" is not affiliated, associated, authorized, endorsed by, or in any way connected with any cricketer mentioned. All names, images, and trademarks remain the property of their respective owners, and their use does not imply any endorsement or association, nor does it intend to infringe upon any personality, publicity, or intellectual property rights of any entity/person, but are used solely for the purpose of identification.

TREE COFFEE IS HAVING ITS CLIMATE MOMENT

It's still very early days for climate-resilient coffee varieties Liberica and Excelsa. But connoisseurs who once debated tasting notes and roast curves of Arabica and Robusta are beginning to discover these new tones. But far from cafes, growers in the hills of Karnataka say the real story of coffee today is also about survival

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In the traditional belts of Kodagu, Chikkamagaluru and Hassan, planters speak of a calendar that no longer follows memory. Jacob Mammen, managing director of Badra Estates, says climate change is already having a significant impact on the cultivation of traditional coffee varieties such as Arabica and Robusta coffee. The biggest challenge, he explains, comes from increasingly unpredictable weather patterns, particularly the timing and intensity of rainfall.

Coffee plants depend on a very specific rain pattern for flowering. A spell of rain triggers flowering, and a "back-up shower" about two weeks later helps the flowers set properly. In recent years, however, growers have been facing erratic conditions — either too much rain, too little rain, or rain arriving at the wrong time. This disrupts the flowering cycle and directly affects yields. Extreme weather events are also becoming more frequent. Jacob notes that hailstones last year destroyed coffee flowers on the estate, wiping out the crop in affected areas. Unseasonal rains are also creating harvesting and quality issues.

"Early showers, sometimes as early as January, can cause new flowers to open while ripe cherries are still on the plant. When that happens, pickers must stop harvesting to avoid damaging the fresh flowers. At the same time, rain can cause the ripe cherries to deteriorate or dry out, affecting the quality of the beans."

IN A WARMING WORLD

Against this backdrop, Jacob says interest is growing in climate-resilient varieties such as Liberica coffee. Traditionally, Liberica was treated as a fence-line crop and not cultivated as a main plantation variety. At Badra, it is still largely grown as "tree coffee" along the boundaries rather than replacing Arabica or Robusta in the fields. However, the estate is beginning to rethink this approach.

Coffea liberica is considered more climate-resilient than other major coffee species such as Coffea arabica because of several natural characteristics. Liberica trees can tolerate higher temperatures and grow well in hot, humid tropical environments where Arabica often struggles. The plants develop deep and extensive root systems that allow them to access water from deeper soil layers, helping them survive drought conditions. They also show greater resistance to diseases such as coffee leaf rust, which has historically devastated many coffee plantations.

In addition, Liberica trees are larger and sturdier, enabling them to withstand heavy rainfall, storms and variable weather patterns. Their ability to grow in poorer soils and adapt to changing environmental conditions make Liberica a promising climate-resilient coffee species as global warming increasingly threatens traditional coffee cultivation.

Market demand is another factor driving the renewed interest in Liberica. According to Jacob, buyers in India as well as overseas are increasingly curious about the variety because of its distinct fruity and sweet flavour profile, which sets it apart from Arabica and Robusta.

However, Liberica still faces output-related challenges. At present, its yield is significantly lower than that of Arabica or Robusta. This is partly because it is still largely grown as a tree crop along fences rather than as a fully managed plantation variety.

SEEKING EXCELSA

Another tree coffee variety, Excelsa, is also generally considered climate-resilient. Jury is still out on whether it classifies as a variety of Coffea liberica, as it shares many of the hardy traits of Liberica. Excelsa can tolerate high temperatures, irregular rainfall, and humid tropical conditions better than Coffea arabica, which is more sensitive to climate change.

Adhi Savla, senior manager for Coffee Community at Blue Tokai, says they source Excelsa from South Indian Coffee Company but it is currently sold out. "The quantity is very low as they are experimental lots," he says. "Excelsa offers a heavier body with distinctive cola-like notes, often reminiscent of cola, black currant and molasses, making it a unique experience for coffee drinkers."

South Indian Coffee Company (SICC) has been exporting Excelsa since 2017. "We have been working with Kew Gardens in the UK since 2021 and they've proved that Excelsa and Liberica are two different species," says Akshay Dashrath, co-founder of SICC and a fifth generation coffee grower.

"In India, when it's hot, it's usually dry. Sometimes our issue isn't just heat; it's also too much moisture. For example, in 2024, we had 65 inches of rainfall on our farm. That is normal historically, but what was abnormal was that 33 inches of that came in a single month of July. These conditions are hard for Arabica and Robusta to tolerate. Excelsa does well in these variable conditions because it is a deep-rooted tree."

Their Mooleh Manay Estate in Coorg produces about three tonnes of clean Excelsa a year. SICC has started to breed Excelsa. "Arabica has had 500 years of selective breeding; Robusta has had 150. Excelsa and Liberica have had zero. What we have in India is essentially a wild population introduced in batches in 1872, the 1920s, and the 1940s," Akshay adds.

SOME CHOOSE TO BE PRACTICAL

For Arvind Rao, former chairman of the Karnataka Planters' Association, adaptation is currently less about breakthrough genetics and more about practical mitigation. "Most of us have not really tried climate-resilient varieties because there are not any real varieties available as of now, even from the Coffee Board," he says. "So we are managing whatever plants that are already there in our fields." The response, for now, is infrastructural and ecological. "We are conserving water, building storage tanks, putting up irrigation so that during blossom we can irrigate and mitigate drought to some extent," Rao explains.

Shade regulation has also changed. "We are maintaining slightly higher shade to keep temperatures lower. Of course, it reduces the crop somewhat — but it helps manage heat stress."

Soil health has become central to the conversation. Composting and organic matter incorporation are being used to improve water retention.

RESILIENCE ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH

From a quality and market perspective, another industry observer and a processing expert, who works with post harvest coffee processing and fermentation, Binny Varghese— who has travelled extensively across different coffee regions in the country — sees resilience as layered rather than absolute.

"From what I've observed across Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, S795 still holds strong," says Binny. (S795 is an Arabica selection derived from Kent and S288 lines that contain some Liberica ancestry). It is known for high yield, coffee leaf rust resistance, and a flavour profile with notes of mocha or chocolate.

"It's not fashionable, but it's genetically stable and relatively adaptable to mid-elevations. With disciplined picking and controlled fermentation, it can produce very clean cups with structured acidity and good sweetness."

Selection 9, Binny adds, remains significant. Selection 9 is developed in India by crossing Tafarikela (an Ethiopian Arabica) with Hibrido-de-Timor (a rust-resistant hybrid).

"Genetics define potential yield and disease resistance," he explains. "Processing determines how much of that potential translates into cup quality."

TRACKING CLIMATE RISKS WITH DATA

Conversations around climate risk, he says, have become markedly more direct. "Earlier, climate conversations were cautious. Now they are data-driven and experience-based. Younger producers are using modelling."

Farmers now openly track irregular blossom showers, temperature spikes during fruit development and unexpected rain during drying — all of which affect bean density and fermentation predictability.

"What's interesting is that adaptation is no longer seen as just 'plant a new variety'," notes Binny. "It's integrated thinking — canopy management, spacing, moisture management, selective picking, even adjusting processing styles to handle inconsistent ripeness."

Could climate-resilient genetics become part of India's specialty identity?

I believe so — but it has to be handled carefully," says coffee educator & post-harvest processing expert Binny Varghese. "India already has a strong agroforestry identity — shade-grown systems, intercropping, biodiversity. Climate-resilient genetics can strengthen that story if cup quality remains central." Resilience, he argues, should not mean merely surviving stress. "It should mean producing coffee with high density, clean fermentation expression and consistent sensory performance despite climate pressure." In Karnataka's hills, the shift is no longer theoretical. It is already underway — tree by tree, block by block, season by season.

"What's interesting is that adaptation is no longer seen as just about 'plant a new variety' of coffee. It's integrated thinking — canopy management, spacing, moisture management, selective picking, even adjusting processing styles to handle inconsistent ripeness"
— Binny Varghese, COFFEE EDUCATOR AND POST-HARVEST PROCESSING EXPERT

"Market demand is a factor driving the renewed interest in Liberica. Buyers in India as well as overseas are increasingly curious about the variety because of its distinct fruity and sweet flavour profile, which sets it apart from Arabica and Robusta."
Jacob Mammen | MD, BADRA COFFEE ESTATES

"We definitely do get requests from specialty coffee roasters specifically, who are looking into climate-resistant species. As you may know, there are 133 different coffee species. In India specifically, what we and a lot of other growers are cultivating is Excelsa"
Komal Sable & Akshay Dashrath | SICC

Liberica's here. Have you tasted it yet?

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Coffee enthusiast couple, Anjan Babu and Sanjana Sudarshan brews Liberica coffee at home, sourcing the beans from the roasters usually at Blue Tokai or Drip and Drop Coffee. Sanjana says the couple had their first Liberica coffee at the Ground Up Cafe. "We just fell in love with it the first time we had it. We got a packet of Liberica beans for home, and we've been enjoying it ever since. It has a jackfruit flavour to it," she says.

Bharath Raghavan, a product manager, began his journey into coffee over 10 years ago. He started with research on filter coffee, a popular variant in Bengaluru, before exploring other coffees and beans from his friend who runs a barista, the Dialogues Cafe. Bharath sources beans from different parts of India and the world during his travel.

He says Liberica is slightly lesser-known in Bengaluru's coffee scene. "I would say less than 5% of available beans are Liberica. It is very rare to find them in India. I came across Liberica first at Araku Estate," he says.

THE 'SMOKY' COFFEE

Liberica is a strain that tends to polarise interest. Bharath says he likes a few things about it — Liberica has a slightly smoky flavour and more body, which is very specific to it. "I like my coffee to be full-bodied, jammy, and tart, so I started exploring coffees in that space."

BEAN THERE, DONE THAT: Coffee connoisseurs Anjan and Sanjana (above) and Bharath (right)

Some of his friends who have similar tastes love Liberica for its body. "Others dislike it because the smokiness is too overwhelming for them. For Liberica, I personally use an Origami dripper and a pour-over method on a Hario V60. I've found that this gives me the best result for my palate. Liberica has such a heavy body, you need a more refined brewing method. I tried using a French press, but as that method adds more texture, it became too thick and difficult on my palate. A pour-over was more refined and worked really well," says Bharath.

"I think Liberica will pick up in Bengaluru because people who appreciate 100% Arabica are now starting to understand different brewing and grinding methods," he says. Temperature and grind size changes play a big role with Liberica because it is a sensitive bean. Unlike Robusta, where you can usually get a decent cup regardless, Liberica's profile varies quite a bit depending on the temperature and the press you use, he adds.

KNOW YOUR COFFEE

- **Robusta** | Coffee plant with shallow root system; grows about two-and-a-half feet as adult plant, has hair-like roots on the surface; **absorbs nutrition and moisture from the top level of the soil; higher temperature tolerance provided it has access to moisture**; evolved Uganda and Congo; **caffeine level is 2.5% and above**
- **Arabica** | Plants with slightly deeper root system; **more drought-tolerant than Robusta but lower temperature tolerance**; evolved in Ethiopia with seasonal rains and extended dry periods; **caffeine level is 1% to 1.5%**
- **Excelsa** | Evolved along the riverbeds of Uganda and South Sudan, where it is extremely wet during wet months and extremely dry when the river recedes. **The plant is evolved to handle changing climatic conditions; caffeine level is 0.7% to 1%**
- **Liberica** | Higher temperature tolerance but lower yields, making it less profitable for a grower compared to Excelsa; **caffeine level is 1.2% to 1.7%**

A GREEN COFFEE WAVE?

Speaking about the growing trend of green coffee, Khyyum Khan, sales head, Benki Brewing Tools, says: "Compared to Arabica and Robusta, Liberica is much cleaner and has its own unique characteristics. When you consume or grind Liberica, it has intense flavours that pop out. We are not used to drinking it, so when I give you something very different, people catch onto it as an individual trend. That is how Liberica and Excelsa started trending."

Adhi Savla, senior manager for Coffee Community at Blue Tokai says a lot of people are aware of 'climate-resilient Excelsa'.

Sunalini Menon, president of Coffeelab, Bengaluru, notes that Liberica and Excelsa have been cultivated not only in countries like the Philippines, or Malaysia, but also in Sierra Leone where it was first discovered. "It has also been here in India for decades. It's just that we were cultivating it not as coffee but as a plant to demarcate the boundary of one farm from another," she says.

Komal Sable, founder, South Indian Coffee Company (SICC), says though Arabica and Robusta are the main crops for any producers in India at the moment, there is a gradual growing demand for Excelsa. "We definitely do get requests from specialty coffee roasters specifically, who are looking into climate-resistant species. As you may know, there are 133 different coffee species."

Excelsa has a fruity profile in the cup. "It's naturally low in acidity and quite sweet, which makes it a great entry point for people who don't usually enjoy very acidic coffees," she says.

Khyyum Khan says Benki Brewing is considering discontinuing sale of Liberica. "The problem with Liberica is that it changes very fast. For us, the sweet spot for a regular cafe is somewhere between 30 to 45 days. For coffees like Liberica, we store it in a colder atmosphere in single servings, but they still change every single day. For a commercial setup, changing recipes and training staff often is very difficult," he says.

BEST OF OORU

AJIT BHASKAR

MY 5 PLACES TO GO THINDI-HOPPING UNDER ₹100

Here are five places in Bengaluru that show eating out can still be about lip-smacking food without breaking the bank

A BHATH MASALA DOSE, PLEASE!

We live in an age where growth of a business is measured by number of outlets, turnover, ratings on food delivery platforms, menu variety, ads, social media visibility of founders, so on and so forth. S K Tiffin defies each and every aspect. They are a singular outlet. They are hard to locate, because they are located in one of the bylanes of Cubbonpete. There is no seating, no parking. They are open from 8.30am to 11.30am. Maybe noon. That is because **Rupesh avaru and his wife prepare a certain quantity of food every day and they close the shop once they run out of food.**

S K Tiffin Room, Cubbonpete

Hence, the loyal customers start queuing up at 8.15am itself. I am proud to have been their first customer numerous occasions. for the day on Post 8.45am-9am, the wait time for their dose is anywhere from 30-35 minutes. **Speaking of their menu, it has exactly six items. Idli, chitranna, tomato bhath and dose — khali, masale and bhath masale.** They are not on Swiggy and Zomato. The focus is solely on quality. S K Tiffin room's bhath masale is my favourite dose on Earth. Rupseh avaru always serves his customers with a smile. Places like S K Tiffin Room also defy the usual 'idli-vade-dose-kesaribhath-filter coffee' stereotype that is associated with Bengaluru darshinis. **If food is pilgrimage, S K Tiffin Room is a temple.**

POLISHING IT OFF, 'DILL SE'

Karnataka loves dill (sabsige soppu). Not many thindi outlets utilise this wonderful herb. That is until Cubbonpete Muddanna decided to change that in the late 60s and early 70s. **Located literally some 200 metres from Vidyarthi Bhavan, this place is truly a hole in the wall, hidden gem, that is very easy to miss. They are known for their sabsige idlis. All their dose varieties have sabsige soppu.** Their bhath masale with muddanna palav tucked in is a work of art, and their open dose with a savoury, spicy pudi deserves a place in the pantheon of culinary marvels. The place is so narrow that customers can only get in a queue and place their orders. They'd have to stand and eat outside the place. **Pete style darshinis also defy the perception that all dose places come with sambar and filter coffee. Namma SLN serves neither.** But my favourite part about this place is that even in this day and age, they never accept payment until the customer has finished eating. That is some serious trust!

Namma SLN, Gandhi Bazar

HOUSE OF GOJJAVALAKKI

When it comes to Bengaluru, dose, idli and vade hog all the limelight. Rightfully so, because they are unparallelled and perhaps, the best this universe has to offer. However, **places like South Kitchen defy that by not only excluding dose from their menu, but also by gaining an iconic status within 10 years of opening in the heart of south Bengaluru.** My personal favourites here are the shavige, kesaribhath and gojjavalakki. The shavige is incredibly light. How they manage to keep each strand separate in spite of using such less fat is nothing short of a technical wonder. **It is one of the rare places in Bengaluru that serves banana kesaribhath. It is truly outstanding.** The gojjavalakki is an essay on balancing flavours and maximising flavours with minimal use of fats. Sour, sweet, with some heat from chilies, this form of avalakki (poha) is not commonly found in Bengaluru. The coconut chutney that comes with the thindi items is one of the freshest you'll find anywhere. Their filter coffee is excellent as well. One places the order, and leaves with their food immediately. Yet another gem in the star studded thindi crown of Bengaluru!

South Kitchen, NR Colony

AN IDLI-CHUTNEY RUN

Ajji Hotel is more like a shack or a shed. There is no nameboard. It has a bluish green façade and a metal canopy to provide some shade. But if you step into the lane where it is located, you'll know where it is thanks to the crowd outside around 8.30am. **They have exactly 3 items on the menu. Idly, soppu bonda and chitranna. But the star is the fourth item, which also happens to be unlimited. The chutney. It is red hot, literally.** It'll wake up your soul and your sinuses. It pairs perfectly with the pillowy soft thatte idlis. No ghee, no pudi, no theatrics. This hotel is a story of an Ajji who is a model of grit and determination. She met with an accident and an ensuing brain injury. However, she has bounced back from it in two months, and the place is back in business. I honestly don't care much for the chitranna and the bondas, **but I have run 25km from Whitefield to Ajji hotel just to grab idli with that killer chutney.** You should too. I mean visit the place. Running is optional.

Ajji Hotel, Rajajinagar

'CHAT' PE EK CHARCHA

Thindi hogs all the limelight when it comes to Bengaluru's culinary landscape. **Our chats are quite frankly underrated. They are light, and use a variety of fresh ingredients. They do not rely heavily on ghee and deep frying, and there is little reliance on potatoes.** 'Masal Puri' is quite popular. However, Shetty Style chats are a treasure! Congress masala with mavinkayi (raw mango) and pineapple, bun nippat (OG burger), tomato slice, hesarubele (moong dal) masala are just the tip of the Bengaluru's variety chats iceberg. Balaji Chats Corner takes things to a different level with things like Cucumber Noodles. Zoodles scraper/ cutter is used to make 'noodles' with cucumber, which is then converted into a chat by mixing it with peanuts, chutneys and spices. Fantastic example of innovation and a play on flavours and textures. Their other creation, which is a personal favourite, is onion chakli masala. Onion slices, baby chaklis (murukku), chutneys, spices, coriander, grated carrots and sev. You bite into the sev at first, then the grated carrots start to get the juices flowing. The punch from chutneys and spices kick in. Towards the end, the zing from the burst of juices from raw onion slices concludes the symphony of flavours!

Balaji Chats Corner, Basavanagudi

(Ajit Bhaskar is a Bengaluru-based food chronicler best known for founding volunteer-led food-hopping community Thindi Capital)

B'luru to revive municipal bonds, targets ₹1k-cr push to fund infra

Each City Corpn Expected To Raise ₹200cr

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Pic for representation

Credit rating agencies will evaluate the financial capacity of the corporations, including their revenue generation and debt repayment ability. Once the documentation and rating process are completed, authorities plan to move forward with the bond issuance, with operational details expected to be finalised in consultation with the civic officials in the coming months

Bengaluru: The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) is preparing to revive municipal bonds as a financing tool for city infrastructure, with plans to mobilise about Rs 1,000 crore in the initial phase.

Bengaluru also has historical precedent in this area. The erstwhile Bangalore Municipal Corporation (BMC) was among the first urban bodies in India to issue municipal bonds in 1997. Officials say the renewed push is intended to revive that model while aligning the city with broader reforms in urban finance.

Confirming the plan, additional chief secretary, UDD, Tushar Giri Nath told **TOI** that GBA was working towards preparing Bengaluru's five city corporations to access financial markets.

"The initial aim is to raise Rs 1,000 crore through the municipal bonds. The initiative is aimed not only at raising funds but also at improving the financial systems and transparency of municipalities. Before issuing bonds, civic bodies must undergo credit rating assessments and document their assets, revenue streams, and financial health," Nath said.

The basic plan to leverage the instrument found a mention in the Karnataka State Budget 2026–27, where CM Siddaramaiah announced that corporations under the GBA framework would mobilise resources for development works by issuing municipal bonds based on their balance sheets.

Officials have confirmed to **TOI** that under the plan, each of the five corporations is expected to raise roughly Rs 200 crore, taking the combined amount to about Rs 1,000 crore in the first phase. They said the process requires municipalities to undergo a formal credit rating exercise before bonds can be issued.

"Municipal bonds require the ranking of the municipality. We will have to put our assets and revenue streams up for assessment. Once we get a proper credit rating, we can float bonds and expect a better response from investors," Nath said. To prepare for the bond issuance, the state govt is working with intermediaries and financial institutions, including the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (Hudco), to compile documentation and establish the required financial processes.

Authorities stressed that the broader goal is to make municipal corporations financially credible institutions that can access multiple funding sources. "The amount itself is not a big issue. The idea is to ensure municipalities are in a position where they can access funds through formal financial markets," Nath said.

Municipal bonds are widely considered a viable funding mechanism for urban local bodies because they generally carry lower interest burdens compared with conventional bank loans and reduce dependence on govt grants.

2-wheeler gutted in fire after accident, rider suffers minor injuries

Bengaluru: A gearless scooter was gutted in a fire after a speeding MUV rammed into it, dragging it for over 100 metres on Jayamahal Main Road, RT Nagar, Saturday night. The rider, Roopa from Sanjaynagar, was hospitalised with minor injuries.

The scooter fell on its left side and got stuck under the front-left wheel of the MUV. As it moved for around 100 metres, an accidental fire broke out after petrol leaked from the scooter. Police are looking for the driver, who fled the scene. TNN

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SHE-POWERED VB

TOI

SUNDAY SPECIAL : Marking Women's Day, the Chennai-Mysuru Vande Bharat was operated by an all-women crew between Mysuru and Bengaluru

Email threat to DRDO lab claims 14 IEDs planted through drones

Chaithanya.Swamy
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Bengaluru: An anonymous email threatening a bomb attack at the Gas Turbine Research Establishment (GTRE), a Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) lab in CV Raman Nagar here, was received on March 5.

The premises were searched thoroughly, and it was declared a hoax. GTRE specialises in the design, development, and testing of advanced gas-turbine engines for military aircraft and marine applications.

According to the complaint filed by the divisional head at GTRE, Lt Col Sunny Rathee, the threat was received around 4.25am on March 5 from the email ID 'ajitham_kudumba@outlook.com' to the official email ID of GTRE, 'director.gtre@gov.in'.

"The message claimed that 14 EXP (Expl. Formed Projectile) IEDs filled with cyanide gas had been planted inside the GTRE premises and warned that a possible blast could cause damage within a 1.75-km radius, asking authorities to evacuate staff by 11am to avoid casualties and claiming that drones were used to plant the 14 devices," said police.

The message also contained references to extremist groups and individuals, along with several unverified claims. "In 1954, Pakistan Air Force (PAF) No. 14 Squadron, now called 'Tail Choppers', went on a mission to then East Pak (Dhaka). The LTTE-Pak ISI nexus was solemnised by the DMK govt and Udhayanidhi was honey-trapped using Fathima Syed. She is a direct descendant of Nabigal," the message claimed. It further stated that 'TOSIS cells are in contact with Dr Ezhilan Naganathan (his Ireland visa was banned for LTTE links) Kudumba'.

The email, however, doesn't elaborate what TOSIS stood for. Following the threatening email, the complainant approached police, who have initiated an inquiry to trace the origin of the email and verify the threat.

A senior officer said the threat was a hoax and part of a larger attempt to create panic. The email was noticed a couple of hours after it was sent. The bomb detection and disposal squad (BDDS) was pressed into operation, and all the staff were evacuated from the premises. They did not find any explosives, so it was declared a hoax.

A case has been registered and probe is underway.

Cab driver held for snatching gold chains from shopkeepers

Bengaluru: A 32-year-old cab driver was arrested for allegedly snatching chains from shopkeepers and 28 grams of gold ornaments were recovered from him.

On Jan 29, a condiments store owner told police a man arrived in a car at night, purchased a cigarette and was speaking to his friend seated inside the vehicle. He asked for another cigarette later. When the shopkeeper handed it over, the accused — identified as Sharanappa C — allegedly grabbed him by the neck and snatched the chain before fleeing the spot. TNN

Women's reservation: None of five city corporations reach even halfway mark

▶ Continued from page 1

A breakdown of the numbers across the five corporations shows that none of them individually reaches the halfway mark either. In Bengaluru Central City Corporation, 30 of the 63 wards are reserved for women. The Bengaluru East City Corporation has 23 women-reserved wards out of 50, while the Bengaluru West City Corporation has 55 out of 112. Both the Bengaluru North City Corporation and Bengaluru South City Corporation have 34 wards each reserved for women out of 72 each.

The shortfall is notable because Karnataka amended the Karnataka Municipal Corporations Act, 1976 in 2012 to provide for 50% reservation for women in urban local bodies. The change followed a Supreme Court judgment requiring states to ensure equal representation for women in municipal governance. Before that amendment, the quota stood at 33%, introduced through the 74th Constitutional Amendment that strengthened local self-governance.

While the amendment was " to provide for reservation of not more than 50% of seats to women in the urban local bodies", the govt had reserved 99 or 50% of the 198 wards in the last elections to Bengaluru city council under BBMP in 2015. The same was anticipated in the upcoming elections, but the total number of seats reserved does not touch 50% as per the final list.

For example, in the Backward Classes–A reservation category, which has 19 wards each in the North and South corporations, the notification reserves nine seats for women rather than ten under this category in both corporations. Similar reductions across categories, officials said, collectively lower the final count.

The explanation doesn't have many takers. Former women councillors had already raised concerns when the draft notification appeared in Jan, arguing the GBA framework should have ensured full compliance with the 50% requirement.

With the final list now in place, the numbers mean that Bengaluru's restructured civic system may begin its next electoral cycle with fewer women representatives than the law appears to promise, even as the city expands its municipal framework under the new authority.

QUOTA MATRIX FOR FIVE CORPORATIONS

Corporations	Total wards	SC	ST	BC (A)	BC (B)	General	Total seats reserved for women
Central	63	11 (5)	1	15 (7)	4 (2)	32 (16)	30
East	50	7 (3)	1	14 (7)	3 (1)	25 (12)	23
West	112	9 (4)	2 (1)	30 (15)	7 (3)	64 (32)	55
North	72	9 (4)	2 (1)	19 (9)	5 (2)	37 (18)	34
South	72	7 (3)	1	19 (9)	5 (2)	40 (20)	34
Total	**369**	**43 (19)**	**7 (2)**	**97 (47)**	**24 (10)**	**198 (98)**	**176**

Former councillors had raised concerns in Jan, arguing the GBA framework should have ensured full compliance with 50% requirement

Source: UDD Final Reservation List | Numbers in brackets are seats reserved for women in each category

Truck-car collision kills three youths

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Six men died in three separate road accidents reported on the outskirts of the city since late Saturday night.

In the first accident, reported at 1.15am, three youths from the city died after the sedan they were travelling in rammed into the rear of a 22-wheeler cement bulk truck near Agara Cross in Kaggalipura on Kanakapura Main Road. The trio had been driving towards Harohalli to visit a tomb.

The deceased are Saif Pasha, 22, and Yunif B, 24, both self-employed and residents of Tilaknagar, and their friend Azar Pasha, 22, from Siddapura. According to police, Saif Pasha was driving the car at over 120 kmph when the crash occurred.

"Saif Pasha died on the spot, while Yunif and Azar succumbed to their injuries at hospital," a police officer said. The truck driver, Rafiq, fled the spot immediately after the accident but was traced and arrested by Sunday evening. The sedan belonged to a relative of Saif Pasha.

Farmer dies after car collides with bike

In another incident reported late Saturday night, a 35-year-old farmer died after a speeding car collided with his motorbike near Madgugiri in Tumakuru district. Narayana, a resident of Mallekavu village, died on the spot. Police have launched a search for the car driver, who fled after the collision.

Driver, assistant killed after truck loses control

On Sunday morning, a truck driver and his assistant died after their cement-laden vehicle lost control and rammed a roadside tree at Sopanahalli Gate near Kunigal.

The deceased are Rashid Ali, 25, and his assistant Ameen Ahmed, 23, both natives of Kerala.

Family of student calls it targeted attack, questions safety in hostel

▶ Continued from page 1

The injured included warden Blessy and a girl student. The victim's family called it a targeted attack. Lakshmikant, father of the deceased, said in a complaint that his son **Hemanth** was stabbed with a knife.

He blamed the school management for negligence and demanded action against the accused and the hostel's administrative officer. IGP of Ballari Range, Dr PS Harsha, said the police, along with Scene of Crime Officers and a Forensic Science Laboratory, inspected the premises.

Officials said the investigation was being handled with caution as both the accused and the victims were minors. District child protection officer Subhadradevi said CCTV cameras installed on the premises were not functioning due to lack of maintenance.

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Airline offers ₹1k for dented bag, flyer sues & wins ₹17k

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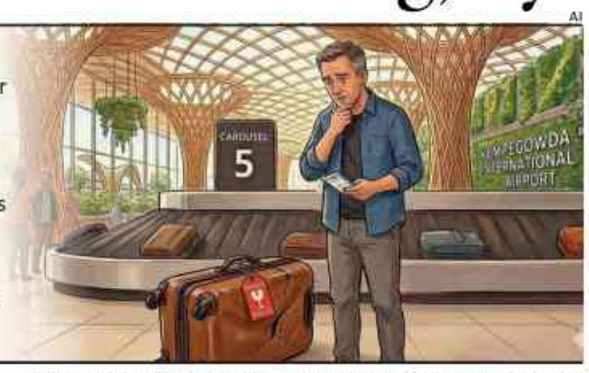
Bengaluru: Ever got back damaged luggage at the airport and walked away disappointed? A 28-year-old Bengalurean experienced a similar issue, but he decided to fight back. A year and a half on, the consumer forum has concluded that the airline was negligent and ordered compensation and litigation costs.

CONSUMER IS KING

Saurabh Raperia, a resident of Old Airport Road and a member of Air India's frequent flyer programme, travelled from Delhi to Bengaluru on Sept 8, 2024, with a fragile tag placed on his checked-in trolley bag. On arrival at Kempegowda International Airport, when he went to collect his bag, he found a significant dent on it. He approached the airline's baggage service counter to lodge a complaint, but the executives allegedly refused to accept it or issue a property irregularity report (PIR), instead asking him to raise the issue via email.

> The opposite party (airline) has taken a defence that, as per its carriage policy, if a passenger leaves the baggage delivery area without reporting damage, the baggage is deemed to have been received in good condition. This defence cannot be accepted here, as the complainant has clearly established that he attempted to report the damage at the airport itself but was prevented from doing so by the airline's own staff
> —Consumer commission



AI

Later that day, he posted about the incident on X. Air India responded seeking his ticket details, baggage tag number, and a damage complaint number. He shared the available information, noting that no complaint number was issued as the staff had refused to register his grievance. On Sept 9, 2024, he formally emailed the airline seeking compensation. Two days later, Air India offered Rs 500, which was later revised to Rs 1,000 after he termed it inadequate.

He maintained that the airline should either replace the damaged trolley with one of similar quality or compensate him Rs 13,425. However, the airline reiterated that passengers who leave the baggage area without reporting damage are deemed to have received their baggage in proper condition.

He contended that this stand was untenable as it was the airline staff who refused to register his complaint. Despite several follow-ups seeking a refund, the issue remained unresolved. Growing tired, he issued a legal notice to the airline on Sept 23, 2024, but got no reply.

On Dec 10, 2024, Raperia filed a complaint with the consumer commission. Air India denied the allegations, contending that there was no deficiency in service or unfair trade practice, and sought dismissal of the complaint.

After going through all the documents and hearing both sides, the commission held that the airline offering compensation amounted to an implied admission that damage had occurred while the baggage was in the airline's custody, and having admitted as much, Air India could not subsequently deny liability. The commission said: "A service provider cannot rely on an international policy when its own officials have obstructed compliance with it."

Citing settled law, the commission noted that once damage to checked-in baggage is established, the burden shifts to the airline to prove absence of negligence. No such evidence was produced by Air India. The commission, on Feb 17, 2026, directed Air India to pay Rs 7,000 in damages and Rs 10,000 as litigation costs.

Late-night scare: Cops rescue twin girls locked in bedroom

Bengaluru: Two three-year-old girls were rescued by city police after they accidentally locked themselves inside a bedroom at their house in Ramamurthy Nagar late on Friday.

According to police, the children's parents, both working professionals, called the emergency control room (112) around 11.20pm after realising their twin daughters had locked themselves inside a room. The couple had been watching TV while the twins were playing in the bedroom. The girls played with the multi-point locking system on the door and accidentally locked it from inside.

Soon after, the children began crying. The parents tried to calm them down and explain how to unlock the door, but the girls were unable to follow their instructions. Neighbours who heard the commotion gathered at the house and attempted to pacify the children from outside the door. Some suggested breaking it open, but the family did not have the tools to do so. "We dialled 112, and in less than 10 minutes, a Hoysala vehicle arrived at the spot," the parents said.

Assistant sub-inspector Gurumurthy and head constable Vekantesh spoke to the children and tried to reassure them. "Using an iron rod and other materials, we pried open the door and broke the lock. The girls stood near the bed and cried. We asked their mother to console them," the ASI said. TNN

Illegal mortgage on apartment land leaves homebuyers in legal limbo

Many Owners Battle For Their Rights

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Bengaluru: Illegal or undisclosed mortgaging of land used for apartment projects is emerging as a growing concern in the city, exposing homebuyers to prolonged legal disputes and financial uncertainty.

In one such case on Anekal-Chandapura Road, residents of an apartment complex with 384 flats have spent years battling to secure ownership rights, after the land and several flats were allegedly mortgaged by the developer without the knowledge of buyers.

"Under property laws, once apartments are sold, the land and common areas are meant to be transferred to a cooperative society or an association of apartment owners. However, governance failures and delays in forming legally recognised resident bodies often allow developers to retain control over land even after selling units," an advocate working closely on the issue said.

Industry observers said this gap is frequently exploited. Developers sometimes create proxy or defective associations that can sign documents and facilitate loans, enabling the mortgaging of properties without the consent of buyers. Sources claimed thousands of crores of rupees are raised through such arrangements in cities across India.

Photo for representation

SOLD, THEN PLEDGED: Developers can create proxy associations that can facilitate loans, enabling mortgaging of sold properties

"Weak enforcement, delayed registrations, and administrative lapses allow builders to continue treating apartment complexes as their assets long after sales are completed. Financial institutions also sometimes approve loans against such properties despite the risks, leaving homeowners vulnerable if the developer defaults," the advocate said.

₹28cr loan raised in 2017

The Anekal-Chandapura Road project illustrates how such disputes unfold. Residents allege that in 2017, the builder mortgaged 188 flats in the project to a private financing company to raise a loan of Rs 28 crore. However, nearly 100 of those flats had already been sold to buyers between 2013 and 2017, many of whom had also taken housing loans from banks. The transaction effectively created a double mortgage, with both individual buyers and the financier claiming financial interest in the same flats.

Soon after the loan agreement, residents began receiving notices stating that their flats were mortgaged and that payments would need to be made to the financier to obtain a no-objection certificate (NOC).

The situation escalated in 2020 when possession notices claiming rights over the project were pasted across the apartment complex after the outstanding loan reportedly rose to more than Rs 42 crore because of accumulated interest. Residents said they were asked to pay an additional Rs 8 lakh to Rs 10 lakh each to release their flats from the mortgage.

Complaint to Rera

Fearing that the apartments could be auctioned, the homeowners approached the debt recovery tribunal challenging the mortgage executed under the SARFAESI (Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest) Act. Complaints were also filed before the Karnataka Real Estate Regulatory Authority (K-Rera).

During the proceedings, the regulator found that only about half the project had been completed even though it was launched in 2013 with a promised completion timeline of 2014-15. K-Rera later ordered recovery of Rs 4.4 crore from the financier after finding that several unsold flats were transferred at a low price and resold at higher values without adjusting the gains against the outstanding loan.

The mortgage on the project was eventually released in 2024 after the financier recovered part of the dues through collateral properties belonging to the builder.

Registration woes

However, the resolution did not fully end the difficulties faced by residents. Out of the 384 flats in the complex, 242 have been registered. But 142 buyers, who have already paid 90-95% of the cost of their homes, are still waiting for registration because construction remains incomplete.

The regulator allowed the apartment's cooperative society to take over the project and sell around 50 unsold flats to raise funds for completion. However, according to members of the society, progress has stalled because the builder has not handed over key documents, plans, and access to the remaining units.

HC ORDER IGNORED

In 2025, Karnataka high court directed the builder to execute a conveyance deed transferring the project to the cooperative society within 120 days. But the order has not yet been complied with, forcing the society to initiate contempt proceedings. For many buyers, the dispute has turned into a long legal battle to secure homes they believed they already owned.

Bone of debate: 498 feeding spots marked for stray dogs

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Bengaluru: The five city corporations have identified 498 feeding spots for street dogs in an effort to strike a balance between animal welfare and public safety, making these locations the only official spaces within city limits to feed strays.

CANINE CARE

In the long run, the corporations plan to establish at least 2-3 feeding zones per ward. With a total of 369 wards, the total feeding zones could exceed 700.

Those feeding dogs should provide food strictly at the marked spots and ensure the area is cleaned afterwards. No bowls or plates will be provided at the sites; citizens must feed the dogs and leave the place hygienic.

The move has sparked a debate. With limited staff to monitor feeding points, critics argue the responsibility appears to rest largely on citizens rather than the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA). Questions have also been raised about practical challenges: should feeders wait until the dogs eat, could stale food be dumped at the feeding spots, and whether irregular feeding could trigger territorial conflicts or behavioural changes among stray packs.

According to officials, 'feeding point' signboards will be installed at the approved sites.

WHAT, WHERE & HOW MANY

East corpn	Central	North	South	West
150	90	70	64	124

Photo for representation

Banned: Feeding on main roads, near hospitals, schools, or crowded public places

Thrice a day: Following an SC order, the animal husbandry department says stray dogs are to be fed daily thrice at fixed times

The initiative follows Supreme Court and Animal Welfare Board of India guidelines to promote structured feeding, reduce dog aggression, and support sterilisation and vaccination drives.

With these feeding spots, BBMP's plan to feed the stray dogs regularly has been revoked, sources added.

Bengaluru North and South corporations plan to increase the number of feeding zones. An official from South city corporation said the current spots are based on the old ward system and would be expanded for better accessibility. An animal husbandry official said, "Here, the responsibility lies mostly on the public. We are understaffed to monitor every feeding zone."

North city commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar said, "Seventy spots are not sufficient for my corporation; we will increase the number soon."

In the meantime, animal activist Sujaya Jagadeesh said multiple spots are necessary as packs of dogs would not share common feeding spots because of their territorial nature. "GBA should ensure the allocated feeding spots are clean, away from rubbish and human disturbance, reflecting respect for these living creatures. GBA must prioritise humane and practical solutions and not do things arbitrarily."

Nandita Subbarao, another activist, said irregular feeding might lead to aggressive behaviour. "Non-regular feeders will not stay until the dogs complete eating food. The dogs' behaviour depends largely on food." She added that there is no point in implementing initiatives which don't educate people on stray dogs. "Humans are attacking and abusing stray dogs, which is not a good sign."

Elephants spotted crossing state's first overpass in south Bengaluru

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Bengaluru: Achieving a significant milestone in wildlife conservation in the city's backyard, the forest department Sunday documented elephants crossing Karnataka's first elephant overpass on NH-209 near Tataguni, on the outskirts of south Bengaluru. Built by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to facilitate the movement of elephants between Bannerghatta National Park (BNP) and the Savandurga forests in Ramanagara district, this was the first time elephants were officially recorded using the overpass since its construction.

Officials noticed elephant movement in and around Anepalya and BM Kaval areas on the western side of NH-209, Friday and Saturday. However, with no elephant dung or footprints found on the highway, officials were puzzled about how the animals crossed the busy road. Suspecting that the elephants may have used the overpass, the Bengaluru Urban forest division installed camera traps along the structure Saturday.

Screengrab

MOVEMENT CAUGHT ON CAMERA

Much to their surprise, a tusker was captured on camera crossing the overpass in the early hours of Sunday at 3.58am, confirming that elephants have begun to use the structure. The overpass, completed in 2024 at a cost of over Rs 20 crore, was specifically designed to enable safe passage for wildlife across the highway.

An official said: "Over the years, many refused to believe that this stretch is part of an elephant corridor. But now it is established beyond doubt... The cameras have captured leopards and other wildlife using the overpass."

The official said the overpass was later modified to make it more suitable for wildlife movement. After taking charge as deputy conservator of forests, Bengaluru, senior forest officer N Ravindra Kumar directed NHAI contractors to create slopes on both sides of the structure and improve the habitat around it. Over the last two years, hundreds of fruit-bearing trees and bamboo were planted on the overpass in collaboration with RWAs and NGOs, transforming the structure into a forest-like patch that encourages wildlife movement.

₹10cr for K'taka's quantum roadmap

Bengaluru: The state has taken the first step towards a Rs 1,000-crore quantum vision, allocating Rs 10 crore for the first phase of the Karnataka Quantum Roadmap in the 2026–27 in the state budget presented Friday.

Science and technology minister NS Boseraju said the initiative aims to position the state as a global powerhouse in the quantum sector. Recalling the recent Quantum Summit, he said the roadmap would focus on developing high-quality human resources for the sector over the next five years. He added that Bengaluru already has a strong ecosystem of academic institutions and startups in quantum computing. "With the required infrastructure and policy support, the state is expected to achieve 20% of the global market share by 2035," the minister said. Land has also been identified at Hesaraghatta for a proposed Quantum City. With institutions like IISc, access to advanced quantum computers, and strong technical talent, the state is set to see significant growth in the sector, he added. TNN

Exam fraud: HC denies bail to civil contractor

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Bengaluru: Terming him a habitual offender, the Kalaburagi bench of Karnataka high court has denied bail to RD Patil, also known as Rudragouda, the alleged mastermind behind several recruitment exam fraud cases.

Patil was arrested in Nov 2023 by a special team of CID led by Raghavendra K Hegde, SP with the financial intelligence unit. The arrest was made under the Karnataka Control of Organised Crime Act (KCOCA). He is currently in judicial custody at Mysuru Central Prison. CID arrested Patil in connection with alleged malpractices

in the first division assistant and second division assistant recruitment examinations conducted by the Karnataka Examinations Authority. According to the chargesheet, Patil, a Class 1 civil contractor from Kalaburagi, supplied electronic devices such as Bluetooth devices and walkie-talkies to candidates to help them cheat in the exams. Investigators also accused him of organising similar scams in multiple recruitment tests.

During the hearing, Patil's counsel argued that all other accused in the case had been granted bail and that the investigation was complete.

However, special public prosecutor M Sudharshan informed the court that Patil faces more than 25 criminal cases linked to recruitment exam frauds, and that Patil had allegedly been involved in a scuffle with prison officials in Kalaburagi when he was granted interim bail for three weeks last year, leading to another case being registered against him.

Considering all information, Justice Rajesh Rai K rejected the bail plea.

Living with menopause, searching for help

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Bengaluru: Many women say their menopausal symptoms are routinely dismissed as unavoidable hormonal changes, leaving them without proper medical guidance or treatment. From hot flushes and irritability to severe anxiety and osteoporosis, the symptoms can significantly disrupt life. But many struggle to find physicians who do not dismiss their concerns as "just another symptom of menopause".

Nalini (name changed), 50, has spent the past year dealing with severe physical and psychological distress, believed to be linked to menopause. She describes persistent heaviness in the head, a burning sensation throughout the body, and intense anxiety, including a recurring fear about her survival. The symptoms have significantly affected her daily functioning and sense of well-being. Despite visiting multiple doctors, she has received varying diagnoses but no proper treatment plan. Her symptoms are so debilitating she cannot stay alone at home and has to depend on her family for support.

AI

For 52-year-old Manasa, the problems have been different but equally disruptive. She has experienced hot flushes for over six months, along with rapid weight gain. "As a working woman, having hot flushes started becoming a major inconvenience in my day. When I consulted a gynaecologist, I expected some advice about how to manage these symptoms. Unfortunately, the doctor dismissed my problems, saying they are menopausal symptoms and nothing can be done."

Women commonly report anxiety, depression, hot flushes, mood swings and irritability, weight gain, joint pain, frozen shoulder, and brain fog, but many are referred from one specialty to another without ultimately receiving any meaningful treatment. This often leaves them to manage the symptoms on their own.

Treatment & awareness

When **TOI** discussed these issues with doctors, they acknowledged that menopause is misunderstood, by both patients and many in the medical community.

Dr Tanya SP, consultant, obstetrics & gynaecology, Kinder Women's Hospital and Fertility Centre, said: "While symptoms like night sweats, anxiety, and vaginal discharge are common, there is limited treatment available. Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is administered in severe cases, but it has drawbacks such as endometrial or breast carcinoma. For vasomotor symptoms like vaginal dryness, we prescribe local oestrogen application, and for osteoporosis we prescribe Vitamin D."

However, some doctors say menopause needs to be looked at objectively to provide better treatment. "The whole concept of menopause being the reason for multiple traumatic symptoms was there for quite some time. Previously, women also neglected these symptoms and did not present to doctors. But now, awareness has increased. However, many doctors are not aware of the range of symptoms, which leads to dismissal," said Dr Madhva Prasad, associate professor, OBG, St John's Hospital.

"In busy clinical practices, doctors do not look at menopause objectively. There is a scoring system and well-established questionnaires which can help with better identification and treatment of the multiple symptoms of menopause," he said, adding, "A short course of HRT with minimal dosage can help women without serious side-effects."

(With inputs from Akilandeshwari J)

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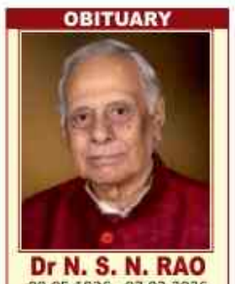

Dr N. S. N. RAO
09.05.1936 - 07.03.2026
With profound sadness, we announce the passing of Dr N. S. N. Rao, a beloved husband, brother, father, grandfather, teacher, and guide, whose life was defined by kindness, wisdom, and a deep love for learning.
A lifelong educator, teaching was his true calling. Over the course of his career, he shaped the minds of countless students and made a meaningful contribution to the field of biostatistics. He was the first to introduce the teaching of Biostatistics in medical colleges in India and authored one of the earliest books on the subject.
To his family, he was lovingly known as Nani, Anna, and Tatha, whose warmth and gentle presence brought joy to all who knew him.
He will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered.
Deeply Mourned by:
Nandagudi Family and near & dear ones.

REMEMBRANCES

Eighth Death Anniversary

SURIYA KUMARI
20-11-1954 - 09-03-2018
We never need a special day to bring you to our mind. For days without a thought of you are very hard to find.
Your presence continues to surround us.
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Looming byelections could move focus away from budget session

BV.Shivashankar
@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: The ongoing budget session of the legislature could be overshadowed by bypolls to two assembly seats — Davanagere South and Bagalkot — with an announcement expected mid-week.

These bypolls will kick off a lengthy election season which would lead up to the assembly elections in 2028. The govt has committed to the Supreme Court that it would hold polls to the five Greater Bengaluru city corporations before the end of June, and notified ward reservations on Saturday. The State Election Commission (SEC) will finalise the voter list on April 6 and officials confirmed polls will follow within 45 days.

"It is a rare scenario where a series of elections are lined up before assembly polls," said Saleem Ahmed, Congress chief whip in the legislative council. "They will not just keep us busy but will also help us prepare for state elections."

PTI

BREAKING GROUND: Mallikarjun Kharge, DK Shivakumar and Priyank Kharge at an event to launch various projects in Kalaburagi Sunday

Stakes are sky-high for governing Congress and principal opposition BJP in both bypolls and Greater Bengaluru (GB) elections. Congress holds both assembly seats and must retain them while securing the most seats in GB corporations to affirm its clout.

"The party is well prepared for both elections. We have no doubt about winning them decisively," said GC Chandrashekhar, KPCC working president.

On the other hand, BJP aims to snatch the assembly seats and assert its dominance in Bengaluru — where Congress remains strong. It would be a stern test for BY Vijayendra, who has faced strong headwinds from within ever after he was elevated to president of the Karnataka BJP unit. Speculation is swirling over his continuance as his three-year term ends in Nov.

"We are aware of realities and have taken it as a challenge to win all upcoming elections leading up to the 2028 polls. BJP will grow stronger under Vijayendra's leadership and it will face assembly polls with renewed vigour," said Sharnu Salagar, MLA and Vijayendra loyalist.

The govt also faces mandates for long-delayed zilla and taluk panchayat polls across the state and pending over five years, plus elections for 5,600 gram panchayats. SEC officials expect these after Aug, post-exam season, once reservations are notified.

Civic polls also loom for 11 of 12 city corporations (excluding Vijayapura, whose term ends Oct 2027), including Mysuru, Mangaluru, Tumakuru, Hassan, Ballari, and the proposed bifurcation of Hubballi-Dharwad. Additionally, 236 city municipal councils await elections.

Biennial polls add to frenzy

Legislative council elections for two graduate and two teachers' constituencies will be due in June and are crucial for Congress, which is eying a majority in the Upper House. Rajya Sabha polls will fill four Karnataka seats, including those vacated by former PM HD Deve Gowda and AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge; Congress could win three, leaving one for BJP.

Online employment platform to be rolled out in six months

Sandeep.Moudgal @timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: As part of efforts to reduce unemployment, chief minister Siddaramaiah has announced the govt's intention to establish an online employment exchange.

Called 'Kayaka Bhagya', the proposed platform will be administered by the labour department and has been allocated a budget of Rs 5 crore for its establishment. Sources say the exchange is an "attempt" to provide a one-stop solution for technically qualified candidates seeking jobs.

Officials say the proposal is the "brainchild" of chief secretary Shalini Rajneesh and labour secretary Salma Fahim, who told TOI the initiative aims to bring industry players from multiple sectors onto a single platform while enabling job seekers to register and be considered for opportunities.

"It is envisaged as a platform to bring both sides to the table," said Fahim. "However, a lot of brainstorming will have to happen and the govt plans a wide range of discussions with industry players."

TOI

EYE IN SKY: Union minister Mansukh Mandaviya at the Isro Satellite Integration and Testing Establishment in Bengaluru

She said the govt would frame broad rules only after discussions with industries on the methodology and way in which the platform would operate. Officials said the portal is expected to offer companies a detailed view of available technical talent pool, allowing employers to identify candidates, call them for interviews, and offer jobs.

"The exchange is completely voluntary and will have industries from across all sectors," Fahim said.

However, some labour department officials expressed scepticism about the initiative, saying the voluntary nature of the portal may limit its effectiveness.

"With every company having its own HR team for hiring, we don't understand the purpose of this platform," said a senior official. "While there was an intent to revive the conventional employment exchange where all firms must mandatorily register, it was shot down by the CMO, industries and IT-BT departments."

Meanwhile, Fahim said the govt is targeting a six-month time frame to establish the portal, after which further development of the project will be considered.

Paperless land surveys by Dec as services go online

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@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: In a major push for transparency and efficiency, the survey, settlement and land records (SSLR) wing of the revenue department has decided to fully digitise its operations, allowing citizens to apply online for land surveys, generate sketches and identify property boundaries without having to visit any govt office.

Officials said the department plans to complete the digitisation process by the end of 2026. Once rolled out, applicants can submit survey requests, track their status, and download official documents from anywhere. The move is expected to reduce delays, get rid of middlemen and curb corruption.

At present, the department receives between one lakh and 1.2 lakh survey applications every month from citizens and govt departments. The department has already scanned survey documents,

TOI

AT A CLICK: File picture of Krishna Byre Gowda at an event to digitise property documents

some of which date back to the British era. But several old records, akarbands and land extent measurements, are not in a readable format. Many entries, especially numerical details, are recorded in Marathi and other languages.

As part of the drive, these records will be converted into accessible digital formats. Accurate land measurements will be extracted from original 'tippanis' — key survey documents that record physical measurements and property boundaries. The data will then be integrated into geospatial digital revenue maps to improve precision.

Unique identification number

"We are using rover equipment to conduct digital surveys to speed up the process and fix boundaries more accurately," said Venkat Raja, SSLR commissioner. "We are also creating a unique land parcel identification number (ULPIN) for every property to prevent future disputes. There is already an Act banning subdivision of agricultural land below five guntas. Despite this, some individuals are trying further divisions. We have now instructed officials to strictly reject such illegal proposals."

Officials said ULPIN-integrated maps will be shared with urban and rural development and panchayat raj, forest and other departments. The maps will include river and lake buffer zones, enabling authorities to quickly detect illegal proposals for layouts, industries, or other projects in ecologically sensitive areas.

Mulling SSC subjects in colleges: Minister

Dharwad: Higher education minister MC Sudhakar said the govt may introduce subjects related to Staff Selection Commission (SSC) examinations in college curriculums to help students perform better in national competitive exams.

He was speaking after distributing certificates at an administrative training programme for newly selected principals at the State Higher Education Academy in Dharwad. Sudhakar said very few candidates from Karnataka make the cut-off in SSC exams. Introducing competitive exam-oriented subjects in the academic curriculum would help students prepare systematically and improve their chances of success, he said. He also defended the decision to introduce student elections, insisting they were necessary to nurture leadership. But he stressed such elections should not lead to confusion, violence, or intimidation on campuses.

Protests in B'luru over polluting firms in Koppal

Koppal: Activists in Koppal have decided to step up an indefinite protest of the expansion of factories allegedly causing environmental pollution, by organising a 'Bengaluru Chalo' agitation during the ongoing legislative session. The protest completed 128 days on Saturday. The 'Bengaluru Chalo' decision was taken during a preparatory meeting. Allamaprabhu Bettadur, chief coordinator, joint action committee, District Bachao Andolan and Parisara Hitarakshana Vedike, said the protest in Bengaluru is likely to be held on March 13 or 17. However, some participants were sceptical of the effectiveness of the proposed protest, citing a lack of support from local elected representatives. City traders, office-bearers of various organisations, JD(S) leader Veeresh Mahantayya Math, and Koppal District Bar Association president AV Kanavi besides green activists, attended the meeting.

Land rush in rural B'luru as chip projects expand

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Bengaluru: Proposed industrial projects in sectors like aerospace, defence, semiconductors and electronics manufacturing have pushed up demand for land in Bengaluru Rural district.

Industries department Officials said about 2,810 acres have been acquired this financial year alone. Data from Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) shows 2,669 acres were acquired in 2024-25, more than double the 1,010 acres in 2023-24.

MB Patil, minister for large and medium industries and infrastructure development, told TOI marquee projects are fuelling the momentum. "The aerospace and defence park, KWIN City projects are driving demand," Patil said. "High tech and defence projects are coming up around the airport area for practical purposes, while eyes are also on Belagavi, Karwar, Dharwad, with core cement and steel firms looking to set up businesses there."

Nelamangala, Doddaballapur, Devanahalli and Chikkaballapur have seen major acquisitions. These include Dabaspet (520 acres), Manchenahalli and Kambalu (486 acres), Ballagere (460 acres), Kodigehalli (363 acres), Linganahalli (518 acres), Hulikunte, Doddamankanala and Kadatippanahalli (1,013 acres), Rabnahalli and Ramnathpura (499 acres), and Kenchanapura (483 acres).

A KIADB official said the pace has picked up in the past two years. "Most of these parcels are being developed and taken over by large industries," the official said. "The KWIN City (Knowledge, Wellbeing and Innovation City) project will draw research and development institutions and foreign universities near Doddaballapur and Devanahalli. The Information Technology Investment Region (ITIR) continues to attract IT and ITES sectors, though the city already has a substantial presence in these segments. Other sectors showing interest include semiconductor manufacturing and automotive industries, including vehicle testing tracks."

He said companies seeking land are being interviewed by the minister and senior officials to ensure serious proposals. "Earlier, private players would acquire KIADB land but would not implement projects, leaving large industrial parcels unused. The interview process helps overcome that hurdle," the official said.

An official from Karnataka Udyog Mitra said electronics is leading the expansion. "We are seeing significant interest from aerospace and mobile parts manufacturing companies," the official said. "With FOXCONN's presence, we are developing an ecosystem to support mobile phone manufacturing. For instance, there is focus on manufacturing cameras, batteries, and other phone components, as well as oxygen suppliers required for fabrication." He said 73 acres have been earmarked for a semiconductor research and manufacturing centre, 20 acres allotted to Wipro for electronics research, and 100 acres to a solar cell manufacturer.

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THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2026

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CDS GEN ANIL CHAUHAN SAYS AI & AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS WILL PLAY A KEY ROLE IN FUTURE CONFLICTS

HACK OF THE DAY HOW TO AVOID SCAMS ON WHATSAPP PAYMENTS

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3. **Block and Report:** For suspicious messages, tap Block > Report Contact to alert WhatsApp and stop further communication.
4. **Secure Your Device:** If your phone is lost, contact your bank and WhatsApp immediately to deactivate payment features.

CAREFUL: Scammers often use "Request Money" buttons disguised as "Refund" or "Cashback" links. Never enter your PIN to "receive" a prize.

Hacks are based on verified public sources. Readers are advised to follow official websites & updated rules

Tip from **neha.saini1**@timesinternet

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Ambulance 'denied', dad carries stillborn baby in cardboard box

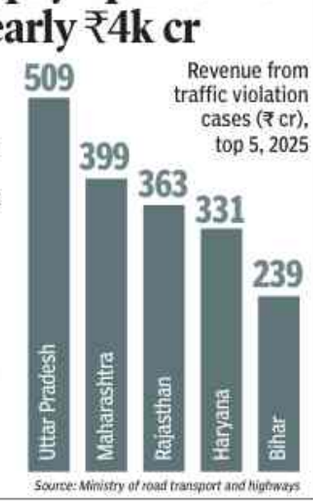
A daily wager was forced to carry the body of his stillborn child back home in a cardboard box after officials at Chakradharpur sub-divisional hospital in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum allegedly denied him an ambulance, **reports B Sridhar.** The hospital chief claimed Ramkrishna Hembram (35) never sought an ambulance. But the state's additional chief secretary ordered a probe to get to the truth amid viral videos of Saturday's episode.

STATISTICS A slice of life in numbers

Rule breakers pay up: Traffic fines touch nearly ₹4k cr

Traffic violation penalties generated over ₹3,700 crore in 2025. The eChallan system now operates in 34 states and UTs, with Lakshadweep and Telangana still to implement it

Revenue from traffic violation cases (₹ cr), top 5, 2025



Source: Ministry of road transport and highways

Russia retains top spot as India's crude source despite US pressure

Impact Of US Sanctions Reflected A Bit In Dec-Jan Purchases From Moscow

Atul.Mathur@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Crude imports from Russia remained at the top of India's oil basket despite US warning New Delhi against purchases from Moscow and the Trump administration later levying an additional 25% penal tariff.

Indian oil purchases from Moscow picked up in 2023, soon after the Ukraine war broke out and Russian crude became available at deep discounts. Data showed even as US officials in 2023 and 2024 repeatedly raised concerns that India's purchases of discounted Russian crude were weakening Western sanctions aimed at cutting Moscow's war revenues, New Delhi imported 1.5 to 2.1 million barrels a day.

US President Donald Trump announced a 25% tariff on Indian goods in July 2025, increasing pressure on exporters, and imposed an additional 25% duty linked to Russian oil purchases a week later.

Department of commerce data showed Russian oil imports in Aug, Sept, Oct and Nov remained in the range of 6.5 to 7.7 million tonnes, or nearly 1.6 to 1.8 million barrels a day.

The impact of US sanctions on Russian oil majors Rosneft and Lukoil, which came into effect on Nov 21, 2025, however, reflected in Indian purchases in Dec and Jan, when the share of Russian crude was 25% and 20%, at 5.8 million tonnes and 4.5 million tonnes, respectively.

While official numbers on crude imports for Feb are yet to be released, data shared by global analytics firm Kpler showed that India imported a little over 1 million barrels of crude from Russia every day, or nearly 4 million tonnes during the month.

In 2025, India purchased nearly 263 million tonnes of crude from different geographies, of which about 85 million tonnes, or 32.3%, came from Russia.

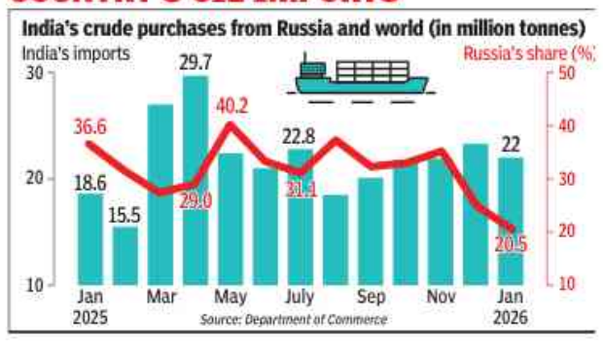
While the share of Russian crude in India's oil basket has reduced over the last three months, New Delhi has diversified its portfolio and added West Africa, the US and Latin America to its list of suppliers. With supplies from West Asia getting choked due to the conflict and restrictions on the movement of vessels through Strait of Hormuz, India is again looking towards Russia to maintain its energy security. "Russia remains the largest supplier of crude oil to India, with imports continuing despite fluctuating volumes and geopolitical pressure. Going forward, we may see its share going down but it will remain among the top," said an official.

Sources said India never stopped sourcing crude from Russia despite Trump linking the withdrawal of a 25% penalty tariff in the proposed trade deal framework to New Delhi's purported pledge to halt such purchases.

The US recently announced a 30-day waiver to India to purchase Russian oil. Sources on Saturday said it merely "removed a point of friction" that was never in anyone's interest to sustain. They added that India has never depended on permission from any country to buy Russian oil, and Moscow continues to be India's largest crude supplier.

COUNTRY'S OIL IMPORTS

India's crude purchases from Russia and world (in million tonnes)



Source: Department of Commerce

Cong will 'regret' move against Birla: Rijiju on session eve

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New Delhi: Parliamentary affairs minister **Kiren Rijiju** fired a fresh salvo at Congress a day before Lok Sabha takes up its resolution for removal of Speaker Om Birla. The party would end up "regretting" its move against the Chair, he said, adding that the action was in line with its frequent targeting of constitutional institutions.

People in the know said an extensive discussion, that may go on for two days, will begin from Monday, and members from BJP-led NDA are likely to frame the notice submitted by 118 MPs from Congress and its allies, such as SP and DMK, against Birla as part of their "historical" subversion of institutions.

Rijiju told **TOI** that Congress and its allies had no valid reason to seek Birla's removal as Speaker. "It was an undesirable notice. Congress has sought this debate and we will take it up extensively. Congress will regret bringing this motion. Their allegations are nothing but a reflection on their attempt to play politics with the Speaker's post," he said.

With NDA having 293 members in the effective strength of 541 in the House, the opposition's motion is bound to be defeated, but the governing alliance's managers are working overtime to bring parties outside their bloc on board to rally maximum support for Birla and deliver a blow to the their rivals.

Rijiju said Birla enjoyed wide support from smaller parties.

Rules allow the Speaker to attend proceedings without presiding over the debate and even defend himself against the allegations. Birla had voluntarily stopped attending the House since Feb 10 when the notice was submitted against him.

Before the debate, external affairs minister S Jaishankar is expected to make a statement on the situation in West Asia in Lok Sabha, an issue on which the opposition has been attacking govt.

Keep 'continuous vigilance': DG Shipping to Indian sailors in W Asia

New Delhi: India's maritime regulator, DG Shipping, has advised all Indian seafarers on vessels in Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman and neighbouring waters to "maintain continuous vigilance and heighten situation awareness", taking note of unprecedented recent incidents.

Referring to two seafarers being trapped inside the accommodation area of a tanker when fire engulfed it, the advisory said the only escape route was through the front portholes, "but it appears that there may not have been adequate provision or equipment to break the glass panels".

An official said, "This is an overall interim review... The objective is to prepare seafarers to respond effectively to all kinds of emergency situations, including awareness of escape routes and other safety measures. It is not specifically related to... MT Sky Light."

MT Sky Light was attacked on March 1 and saw its chief engineer being evacuated to hospital while two crew members remained unaccounted for. TNN

Gulf crisis: Air India adds flights to Europe & US to meet demand

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: With the option of mega Gulf carriers not available for now to travellers between India and the west, Air India will operate an additional 78 flights to Europe, New York and a few other places between March 10 and 18. These extra flights will be between Delhi and New York, London (Heathrow), Frankfurt, Paris (CDG), Amsterdam, Zurich, Malé and Colombo. Mumbai will have additional flights to London.

AI chief commercial officer Nipun Aggarwal said: "Despite the odds, Air India continues to maintain its scheduled services to Europe and North America, sustaining connectivity to several international gateways using alternative routings that are assessed as safe for operations. We are confident that passengers in need to travel to destinations in these regions will appreciate the additional options and reliability with Air India."

The airline's decision comes in "response to sustained high demand for reliable travel options amid the ongoing situation in West Asia." These extra flights will add 17,660 seats on nine routes in both directions. International fares have skyrocketed since the Israel-Iran war broke out on Feb 28.

Cong: Oppn seeks debate on West Asia issue

New Delhi: With external affairs minister S Jaishankar set to make a statement in Parliament on the situation in West Asia, Congress on Sunday said the opposition wants a full-fledged debate the issue in the Budget session's second part.

On Monday a meeting of the joint opposition will also be held on forming a common strategy on the opposition-sponsored resolution for LS Speaker Om Birla's removal, Congress said. TNN

Vande Mataram directive sparks protests in Nagaland, Meghalaya

Bhadra Gogoi & Manosh Das | TNN

Dimapur/Shillong: Opposition to Union home ministry's directive on singing full six-stanza version of Vande Mataram has intensified in Christian-majority Nagaland and Meghalaya, triggering student protests, political objections and appeals to state govts.

Several students and research scholars at Nagaland University boycotted singing the national song during the 8th convocation Friday. Videos on social media showed many seated while Vande Mataram played at the beginning and end of the ceremony attended by Vice President CP Radhakrishnan.

Naga Students' Federation (NSF), CM Neiphiu Rio's Naga People's Front and church groups have opposed MHA's directive mandating singing or playing Vande Mataram before the national anthem at official programmes and educational institutions, requiring attendees to stand at attention.

Naga Students' Federation said the directive ignores Naga cultural sensitivities, religious beliefs and constitutional safeguards under Article 371(A). The Article protects Naga customary law, social/religious practices, and land ownership from parliamentary interference unless approved by state assembly. Nagaland Joint Christian Forum said parts of the song conflicted with Christian faith, while NPF described directive as "forceful imposition".

The matter surfaced in Nagaland assembly earlier this week. Several legislators objected to singing the song. Nagaland Tourism and higher education minister Temjen Imna Along of BJP urged members to view the song in historical and secular context, saying the directive should not be seen as infringing Article 371(A) or Christian belief. Meghalaya has also seen pushback. Voice of People Party legislator Adelbert Nongrum submitted a petition to the chief secretary in Shillong, protesting the directive.

Pune civic body suspends gas-based crematoriums

Pune: The Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) Sunday announced a temporary "suspension of all gas-based crematoriums across the civic areas following a directive from the Union ministry of petroleum and natural gas."

A press release from PMC said the ministry's order, issued on March 5, mandated the prioritisation of propane and butane stocks for domestic LPG cylinders nationwide. This shift resulted in a shortage of gas availability for non-domestic purposes, prompting the civic body to halt its gas-fired furnaces until further notice. As per the statement, all electric crematoriums and those equipped with air pollution control (APC) systems will remain fully functional to minimise the impact. At the Vaikunth crematorium, which sees a high daily volume, the three gas-based units were shut down. Its other furnaces that work on electricity and wood will function. A **TOI** report in Aug 2024 said PMC planned to start 14 gas crematoriums across the city to reduce air pollution after residents' complaints. TNN

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I, Soumya, W/o Mruthyunjaya M.V, R/o No. 004, Omega Aster Building, Chokkanahalli, Yelahanka, Bangalore – 560064, shall henceforth be known as Soumya Mruthyunjaya for all purposes, vide affidavit sworn before Notary on 07.03.2026.

I, K.G. Raju S/O Krishnamurthy R/O 94,9th Main, 6th Cross, Hongasandra, Begur Road, Bangalore 560068 have changed my minor son's name from Nithin R to R.Nithin for all future purposes

I Shivamurti Duradundi Residing at #1244/41 10th Main 5th cross Prakash Nagar Bangalore -560021 My Name change as Shivamurti R Duradundi

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NOTICE is hereby given to the general public that my client Smt. M Rajeshwari has lost the Org Gift deed Doc No. MDP-1-08114/23-24 in the name of Kishan Kumar S of PID No. 1427801438, Site No. 44, Property No. 58, measuring 15x40 =600sq ft, situated at Mahadevpura, K R Puram Hobli, Bangalore East, anyone who finds return to the undersigned and object if any claim within 7 days of publication, failing which no claims will be entertained. Law Globe-9964255277

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Interstellar, Einstein, and the Strange Elasticity of Time

▶Continued from P 1

Tell ten children to meditate for five minutes and ask them to open their eyes when they think the time is up. None will stop together, because five minutes on a clock is fixed, but five minutes in the mind is elastic.

When bored, time drags. When immersed, in music, in coding, in conversation… it vanishes. Psychologists call this "flow," a state where attention is so complete that awareness of time dissolves.

There are, in fact, multiple layers of relativity in our lives. There's physical relativity, the Einsteinian bending of spacetime through gravity and velocity. Then there's psychological relativity, the stretching and compressing of time through emotion, mental state, and attention. And perhaps there's generational relativity: the way each generation inhabits these ideas differently.

For those raised before the digital age, the fourth dimension may feel theoretical. For those raised within immersive storytelling and interactive media, it feels experiential. They don't merely read about warped spacetime; they visualise it, feel it hear it, model it, and in some sense, live inside it.

Many of us assume that children must be taught these concepts from scratch. But often, they are already thinking about them, just in a different language. They may not speak of "spacetime curvature," but they understand that time feels different in different situations. They may not derive equations, but they can imagine moving through dimensions.

They will speak about it, but only if they sense genuine curiosity. If we approach children not as teachers, but as their students; if we ask how they imagine the fourth dimension; if we ask what the music makes them feel; if we are willing to truly learn from them.

Science fiction once felt like speculation about distant futures. Increasingly, it is becoming a shared cultural vocabulary for thinking about reality itself.

Einstein bent time with mathematics. Filmmakers visualised it. Musicians gave it sound. And children are quietly absorbing it, not as fantasy, but as possibility.

Perhaps the elasticity of time is not only a feature of black holes, but also a feature of imagination, stretching across generations, waiting to be unfolded. And sometimes, the doorway into the fourth dimension begins not with equations, but with curiosity — and a simple sheet of paper folded into something more than it first appeared.

7 foreign univs enter Mumbai in partnership with edtech firm

Hemali.Chhapia
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Mumbai: Seven foreign universities—four of which will begin operations from Mumbai before eventually shifting to the proposed Edu City in Navi Mumbai—have been drawn to the city through a partnership model led by an edtech firm that holds a 49% stake in each venture, with the respective universities retaining the remaining 51%. The total investment is around Rs 300 crore.

The institutions are the Illinois Institute of Technology, the University of Aberdeen, the University of Bristol, the University of Liverpool, the University of New South Wales (UNSW), the University of Victoria—Delhi NCR (Gurugram campus), and the University of York. The structure reflects the cautious approach many global universities adopt when entering new geographies. "Foreign universities, by temperament and experience, are risk averse," said Ashwin Damera, cofounder and CEO of Eruditus, the firm partnering with the seven institutions. By sharing ownership with a local partner, they can test the Indian market without assuming the full operational and financial burden of establishing a campus independently.

For decades, regulatory uncertainty and the complexity of building campuses abroad kept most foreign universities away from India. Experts said, overseas experiments elsewhere have also produced uneven results. Campuses set up in countries such as China, Vietnam, Qatar and the UAE have seen varied outcomes.

Whistleblower against illegal hawkers claims murder bid, seeks CM's help

George Mendonca | TNN

She alleged Vashi police lodged a non-cognisable offence, instead of an FIR, holding the attack as a minor altercation between two parties

Navi Mumbai: A 44-year-old Vashi homemaker has sought the CM's intervention claiming she was assaulted twice last week and an attempt made to strangle and molest her by a group of illegal hawkers for lodging multiple complaints against encroachments on public land over the past year. She alleged that Vashi police lodged a non-cognisable offence, instead of an FIR, holding the attack as a minor altercation between two parties.

"The accused have rebutted the charges. Considering that it was a minor altercation prima facie, a non-cognisable offence was filed. We are investigating from all angles," Shashikant Chandekar, senior Vashi police inspector, told **TOI**. Madhu Shankar said she was attacked on March 4 by a gang of illegal hawkers after she took photos of encroachments and shared them with civic officials.

"They tried to snatch my phone and threatened to molest me. The next day, I was brutally attacked and one of them attempted to strangle me. I lodged a complaint at Vashi police station."

She said she was targeted for speaking out against an alleged leader of illegal hawkers, Babu Samanta. She claimed he has not only encroached on public property and an MSEDCL substation but also employs child labourers. Shankar said she sent a complaint to the women and child welfare committee (CWC), Thane, with evidence a year ago, but no action was taken. She said she was told that her letter was forwarded to the labour department. "Vashi police have not taken action against Samanta, saying they will initiate it if they get a letter from the CWC." She alleged Samanta attacked her earlier too, but she was not told what police action was initiated.

Shankar said she's also fighting another systemic battle over allegedly inflated power bills and that the supply to her home was disconnected a month ago after she repeatedly complained to MSEDCL over unusually high bills.

Labourer who killed man using hammer in 2020 gets life term

Mumbai: A sessions court convicted and sentenced a 45-year-old labourer to life imprisonment for the brutal 2020 murder of a man and the attempted murder of an eyewitness using an iron hammer. The court found the accused Subal Choudhary, also known as Bangali, guilty of killing Javed Siddiqui Shaikh and grievously injuring Ayaz Khan following a late-night altercation in a Kurla chawl.

The court also imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 on the accused, noting that the assault was carried out with clear lethal intent. The incident occurred in the early hours of Aug 19, 2020, at Indira Nagar. According to the prosecution, Khan heard a loud quarrel and discovered Choudhary and Shaikh engaged in a physical fight. When Khan attempted to intervene, Choudhary retrieved an iron hammer from beneath a kitchen platform and struck Shaikh repeatedly on the head. Khan was also attacked with the same weapon when he tried to stop the assault. While Khan managed to flee and seek help, Shaikh was later found unresponsive and succumbed to his injuries at Sion Hospital.

During the trial, the defence argued that Choudhary had acted to save himself, claiming that Shaikh and Khan had entered his home to commit theft and initiated the assault. However, the judge rejected this plea, noting the disproportionate nature of the violence. The court observed that the medical evidence, which detailed multiple fractures and crushed brain matter, was inconsistent with a claim of self-protection. Court stated, "The nature, number and seat of injuries clearly indicate intention or knowledge that such injuries were sufficient in the ordinary course of nature to cause death". The judge relied on the testimony of Khan, who was both a victim and an eyewitness. TNN

BEATING THE HEAT, ONE STEP AT A TIME

SL Shanth Kumar

A woman shields herself from the hot summer sun with an umbrella as she walks past a mural in Mumbai

Two minor boys lure girl, 9, with berries, rape her in Hathras district of UP

Agra: Two boys, aged 10 and 12 years, allegedly raped a nine-year-old girl in a village in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras district last week after luring her to a field on the pretext of giving her berries. Police detained both accused late Saturday and produced them before a magistrate, who sent them to a juvenile home in the district, **reports Mohammad Dilshad**.

Police said the horror unfolded on March 6, around 2pm. The girl, a Class 4 student, had gone to a nearby forested area to collect grass when she encountered the two accused, who live in the same village. After the crime, the girl returned home and informed her mother, who filed a police complaint alleging that while the 10-year-old held the girl's hands, the 12-year-old sexually assaulted her.

"A case has been registered against the two juveniles under BNS Section 70-1 (gang rape) and 5/6 of the Pocso Act (aggravated penetrative sexual assault). The girl underwent a medical examination," the SHO of the local PS said Sunday.

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Machli's granddaughter T-94 dies in Ranthambore

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@timesofindia.com

Jaipur: A big cat from Ranthambore's famed Machli bloodline is gone. Tigress T-94 was found dead Sunday in Khandar range of the tiger reserve, with veterinarians linking the death to a severe bloodstream infection and experts raising fresh questions about possible inbreeding in the park's celebrated population.

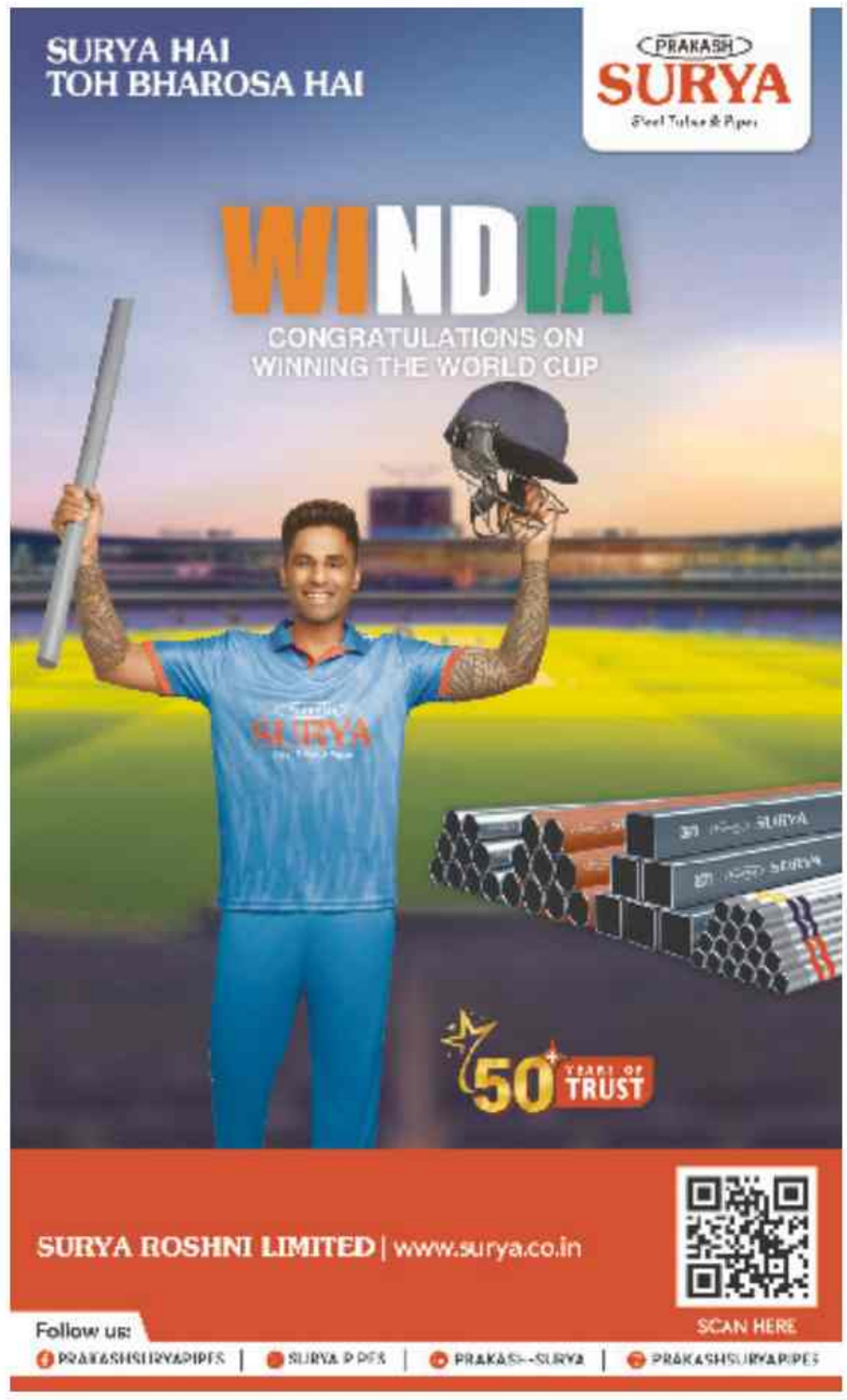
Forest patrols discovered the 11-year-old tigress's carcass during a morning round in Ghoda Ghati area of Khandar range in Ranthambore. Officials moved the remains for examination.

Autopsy revealed multiple organ failure. Kidneys, lungs and heart had stopped functioning. Veterinarians linked the death to septicaemia — a bloodstream infection believed to have caused fluid build-up in body cavity and systemic collapse.

"This occurs when bacteria enter the bloodstream, triggering widespread infection that leads to high fever, respiratory distress and eventually organ failure," a senior official said.

Rajasthan forest department said samples have been sent to a laboratory for further analysis to determine the precise cause. T-94's remains were later cremated according to standard wildlife protocol.

Conservationists said the pattern of deaths and genetic closeness among Ranthambore tigers deserves closer scrutiny. Sources said authorities should examine whether repeated inter-generational breeding is affecting health of animals inside park.



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Hospitals must retain medico-legal case registers: Mum civic body

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Following reports of patients being caught in bureaucratic loops, BMC issued a fresh circular demanding that hospitals strictly maintain medico-legal case (MLC) registers to streamline paperwork.

The circular came after repeated instances of lapses in cases of accidents, disasters, or violence where patients were asked to visit another hospital just to have their MLC registered. "All MLC are vital records," the circular stated, adding that the responsibility of maintaining it falls on the casualty medical officer. It further said that all such MLCs need to include details of injuries, the age of the wound, and the probability of the weapon causing the mentioned injury.

A former medical officer at Sant Muktabai Hospital in Ghatkopar said that while hospitals are required to maintain such records, the larger belief within the system is that one can make do without them. "That is not accurate. Keeping all these records aids in police investigations and further court proceedings," the officer said.

TOI earlier reported a case of a nine-year-old boy who was struck by a two-wheeler in Malad and was rushed to M W Desai Hospital. While the hospital treated him promptly, his family was told to rush to the trauma hospital for a medico-legal certificate.

A medical superintendent of one of the suburban hospitals, however, said the BMC circular may still not make a difference where needed. "A casualty ward needs general specialties; most of the smaller hospitals either do not have them or have them infrequently," the doctor said.

Blacklisting has 'serious civil consequences', 'civil death': HC

Sets Aside 3-Yr Ban On Jal Jeevan Mission Contractors In Chh'garh

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The bench noted that the JJM apex panel's decision did not record any independent finding that the petitioners may have knowingly submitted a forged certificate

Raipur: The Chhattisgarh high court set aside a three-year blacklisting of several contractors involved in Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) work, holding that such harsh penalty cannot be sustained in the absence of a clear, reasoned finding that they deliberately submitted forged documents.

On Feb 28, a division bench comprising the chief justice, Justice Ramesh Sinha, and Justice Ravindra Kumar Agrawal underscored that blacklisting carries "serious civil consequences" as it debars a contractor from all future govt tenders and gravely affects business reputation and livelihood and, therefore, must satisfy tests of fairness, proportionality, and reasoned decision-making.

Relying on Supreme Court rulings in Gorkha Security Services and UMC Technologies, the HC recalled that blacklisting has been described as a form of "civil death", being stigmatic and exclusionary in nature.

The bench noted that the JJM apex committee's decision did not record any independent finding that the petitioners may have fabricated or knowingly submitted a forged experience certificate. The court underscored that the distinction between a bidder who intentionally furnishes a forged certificate and one who relies on a document, which is later found defective, is material while judging the proportionality of blacklisting.

The HC accepted that the employer is justified in cancelling the contract and taking consequential action, including re-tendering at the risk and cost of the petitioners, once the experience certificate became doubtful on verification from the issuing authority.

It held that the petitioners failed to produce conclusive material to establish that the certificate was in fact issued by a competent authority, while contemporaneous verification by the department showed a denial of issuance.

While upholding the termination of contracts as a measure to protect the sanctity of public procurement, the HC held that imposing a three-year blacklisting without a conclusive determination of intentional wrongdoing does not meet the requirement of proportionality.

Mistaken identity led to firing at influencer's home, suspect police

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A video grab of Shahabad Qureshi after the alleged firing incident

Thane: The alleged firing at the home of a Mumbra-based businessman and social media influencer may have been triggered by mistaken identity, police said, based on preliminary findings.

Shahabad alias Shambhu Qureshi (28) of Mahape Road, a Delhi-based history-sheeter with 13 serious cases registered against him, was arrested early Saturday after police suspected his role in firing gunshots at Nadeem 'Baba' Khan's Kausa residence. During an ensuing pursuit, Qureshi allegedly opened fire indiscriminately, leaving two civilians injured.

"We are exploring multiple angles and possibilities, including why the accused came to Mumbra, whether there was any previous enmity with the influencer, and how he sourced the weapons. Multiple teams were formed, including those from the crime branch and a special unit, to examine Qureshi's antecedents and his possible links to gangs in Delhi," said a senior police officer.

According to one of the angles being probed, Qureshi moved to Mumbra to stay with his maternal cousin, possibly to evade his rivals back in Delhi. He apparently feared being tracked by enemies and carried unlicensed firearms for protection. Locally, Qureshi befriended a tea vendor with whom he used to ride a motorcycle across the suburb, police said. "A few days ago, Khan suddenly stopped his car, blocking the path of Qureshi and his friend's bike in the MM Valley area. Though there was no confrontation, Qureshi is likely to have assumed Khan was linked to a rival gang and was sent to target him," a senior police officer said, adding that they were also exploring whether the vendor was coerced into assisting Qureshi in the incident.

1.2k 'unaccounted' Myanmar refugees discovered in a village in Mizoram

HC Vanlalruata | TNN

Aizawl: Authorities in Mizoram have discovered 1,280 "unaccounted" refugees from Myanmar living in a village whose local council failed to report them to the district administration.

The village, Hruitezawl, is in south Mizoram's Lawngtlai district.

Home department officials said the number of refugees in Lawngtlai district was recorded as 5,034 on Feb 27, but the figure increased to 6,314 on March 6.

Deputy commissioner Donny Lalruatsanga told TOI that the number of refugees from Myanmar had not been updated for some time. During the biometric enrolment process, district officials found 1,280 refugees who had not been reported to the authorities by the village council of Hruitezawl.

He said most of these refugees belonged to the Khumi community of ethnic Mizos from southern Chin state of Myanmar who allegedly face perpetual persecution from the Arakan Army (AA). Hruitezawl village is one of the busiest trading points between traders in Lawngtlai district and southern Chin state.

'Spiritual' school shut over alleged abuse, 47 minors taken to child-care homes

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Pune: Alandi Municipal Council and women and child welfare officials on Saturday shut down a spiritual education institute after officials found alleged abuse of minor girls and several violations of child protection norms.

As many as 47 children, 43 boys and four girls, living in the facility have been relocated to govt-run child care institutions for rehabilitation. The facility in the temple town in Maharashtra trains children in bhajan and kirtan. The institute, with branches in Alandi and Nanded, is operated by a kirtankar (spiritual storyteller) and survives on donations.

Alandi is known for spiritual institutes where students are trained in preaching, kirtan, bhajan and musical instruments like tabla, pakhawaj and harmonium. Most students come from Marathwada and Vidarbha. These institutes charge nominal fees.

The shutdown followed complaints regarding the treatment of children at the institute. A case has been registered in Nanded by the parents of a minor girl.

During the inspection, officials reportedly found that the organisation was operating without the mandatory permissions required to house children in a residential facility. They said the institute had admitted several children for spiritual education but did not comply with basic legal and welfare requirements prescribed under child protection laws.

They said the institute did not maintain proper records of the children staying on the premises, had no admission registers, guardian consent forms, or Aadhaar details of the children staying there.

No arrest has been made so far.

Counselling and medical assessments are being arranged for the children.

Engineer held for woman's rape, conversion bid

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Bhubaneswar: Police on Sunday arrested a Hyderabad-based engineer for allegedly raping his girlfriend and trying to force her to convert her religion on the pretext of marriage.

The 33-year-old had allegedly befriended the 22-year-old woman posing as Jayram Sharma. The complainant came in contact with the man about a year back through a mutual friend.

Last week, he travelled to Bhubaneswar to meet her. During the meeting, he allegedly raped her and then pressured her to accompany him to Hyderabad. It was then that he revealed his true religious identity and insisted she change her religion. When she refused, he allegedly assaulted her again and attempted to abduct her, prompting her to lodge a police complaint on Saturday.

Headmaster garlanded with shoes over 'affair' claims

Malay Ray | TNN

Rourkela: The headmaster of a govt school in Odisha's Sundargarh was allegedly thrashed, garlanded with shoes and paraded through his village over allegations of illicit ties with the school's cook.

Four people have been arrested over Saturday's assault on Rohit Kumar Ray ,45. Among them is Yudhistira Patmunda, 39, president of the local school managing committee (SMC) and the cook's husband.

District welfare officer Bhagirathi Patel said he had ordered an inquiry into the assault on Ray, the in-charge headmaster of Khajurdihi Sevashram, a residential school under the state's SC & ST department in Koida area.

Ray was on way to school around 10.30am on Saturday when Patmunda and the others allegedly attacked him. Cops had to rescue Ray from the mob. Villagers had earlier warned Ray to stay away from Patmunda's wife Sakuntala, who was transferred from the school three months ago.

28001/5/2526

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25001/309/2526

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2. Total No. of works : 15 (Fifteen) nos
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4. Class of contractor : "A" Class & "Special" class as applicable.
5. Period of completion : As mentioned in Column 7 of TCN.
6. Other details :

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			From	To
Chief Engineer, Buildings & Bridges, Rural Works, Odisha, Bhubaneswar	Online-02 (Building) / 2025-26	15 (Fifteen) nos	13.03.2026 at 11.00 A.M.	03.04.2026 Up to . 5.00 P.M

Other details can be seen in the bidding documents, which will be available in website www.tendersorissa.gov.in

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e - Procurement
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No. 1107 Dtd. 02-03-2026

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6. Date of opening of Technical Bid 31.03.2026 at 11.00 Hours.
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EXTENSION OF TENDER NOTIFICATION (E-Procurement)

REF: I.F.T.NO:EE/PWD/VJP/PB/4059/2025-26/5050 Date: 02.03.2026

The- Executive Engineer, Public Works Dept. Division, Vijayapur invites tenders from eligible tenderers (registered in Public Works Department) Total 1 work. As per standard bid documents Rw-3 4059-80-051-0-60-132-CMIDP head of account costing of amount for Rs. 100.00 Lakhs, the EMD amount of Rs.1,15,000/- for the work. For above work G.S.T amount will be paid to the Contractor separately and increase in G.S.T shall not be paid in the exterded period of Contract for which the contractor alone is responsible for delay as determined by the authority while granting the extension of time. The calendar events of tenders, dates are fixed as follows(1) Last Date for Receipt of Tender Date-23.03.2026 upto 4.30 PM. (2) Opening of Technical Bid Date-24.03.2026 at 4:31 PM. (3) Opening of Financial Bid Date-25.03.2026 at 11.00 AM. (Clause-3 Conditions of Standard Bid Document may be seen in Departmental Website i.e "htttps://kopp.karnataka.gov.in" and for more information may contact contact help desk Bangalore Phone No. 91 80 46010000, +91 80 68948777) or office of the undersigned

Sd/- Executive Engineer, PWD Division, Vijayapur
DIPR/VIJAYAPURA/790/KSMCA/2025-26

DELHI GMR
Delhi International Airport Limited
Registered Office: New Udaan Bhawan, Opp. Terminal 3, Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi – 110 037, India
CIN NO. U63033DL2006PLC146936

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL), invites Interested Parties to participate in the competitive bidding process for grant of License to Design, Finance, Develop, Set-up, Operate, Manage and Maintain Food & Beverage Outlets at Terminal 3 (T3) of Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi – 110037.

Last date for request of Request For Proposal (RFP) is 19th March 2026.

For more details, please visit our website: www.newdelhiairport.in

DIAL/232/PREM ASSOCIATES

RAIL WHEEL FACTORY
Yelahanka, BANGALORE - 560 064
WEBSITE www.rwf.indianrailways.gov.in

TENDER NOTICE
NO.RWF/S/P1/019/2025-26
dt: 04.03.2026

On behalf of the President of India, Principal Chief Materials Manager invites electronic Tenders from Interested Vendors for supply of the following items on the Indian Railways E-Portal – www.ireps.gov.in. The Tender documents and the Corrigenda to the Tenders, if any, will be available on the Portal only.

Tender No: P1261112 Dtd.: 16/03/2026 Short Description: Chip Conveyor for Chain Assembly Quantity: 150 Mtrs
Tender No: P1261393 Dtd.: 02/04/2026 Short Description: Recentering Tool Holder for CNC Drilling Machine Quantity: 254 Sets
Tender No: P1261257 Dtd.: 06/04/2026 Short Description: Coated Inserts for Recentering Quantity: 5450 Nos

Principal Chief Materials Manager

4001/52/2526
idco Your power to grow ISO 9001 & 14001 Corporation | ODISHA NEW OPPORTUNITIES

OFFICE OF THE DIVISIONAL HEAD, IDCO, CUTTACK DIVISION, JAGATPUR(NEW), CUTTACK-754021
Tender Call Notice No. IDCO/CTC/CIV/E: 511 Dated: 23.02.2026
NOTICE INVITING TENDER UNDER NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-PROCUREMENT

Name of the work : Construction of Paver work at Plot No. 31 to Plot No. B/26 (Both side) of Old Industrial Estate, Jagatpur, Cuttack.
1. Estimated cost : Rs.24.12 lakh
2. Period of operation of Restaurant : 4 Months
3. Other details :

Procurement Officer	Bid ID / Tender reference No.	Availability of Tender on-line for bidding	
1	2	3	4
Divisional Head, IDCO, Cuttack Division	Bid ID/Tender Reference No. CTC/CIV/EST/E – 04/2025-26.	09.03.2026 at 17.00 Hrs.	22.03.2026 upto 17.00 Hrs.

Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement Portal, www.tendersodisha.gov.in and Corrigendum if any will not be published in newspapers and can only be seen in the e-Procurement portal www.tendersodisha.gov.in and www.idco.in.

Sd/- Divisional Head
IDCO, Cuttack Division
OIPR-4001/4075/1/25-26/0020

13001/515/2526

BHUBANESWAR DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
AKASH SHOVA BUILDING
SACHIVALAYA MARG, BHUBANESWAR - 751001
PABX No.0674-2392801/0998 / 6437, FAX No.0674-2390633 / 085
Visit us at: http://www.bda.gov.in/
Invitation for Bids
Bid Identification No. 120/EM/BDA/2025-26 Date. 02.03.2026

Engineer Member, BDA on behalf of Bhubaneswar Development Authority, Bhubaneswar invites percentage rate bids in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for civil works as mentioned below:

1. Nature of works : Civil, Horticulture and Electrical Work (Improvement and beautification of Baagchi Cancer hospital Road from ch.0/000 to 2/904 km Under Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA).
2. Total No. of works : 01 (one) No.
3. Amount put to tender : Rs. 15.18 Crore
4. Class of Contractor : 'A' & 'Special' class
5. Period of Completion : 11 (Eleven) Calendar months
6. Cost of Bid Documents : Rs.10000.00 + 18% GST = Rs.11800.00 (Online transfer by the last date & time for receipt of bids)
7. Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) : 1% of estimated cost put to tender. (Online transfer by the last date & time for receipt of bids)
8. Availability of Tender : From 07.03.2026 to 5.30 PM of 30.03.2026. https://tendersodisha.gov.in.
9. Date of opening of Tender : Dt. 31.03.2026 at 11.30 AM
10. Place of opening of Tender : O/o- Engineer Member, BDA, Bhubaneswar.

Further details can be seen from the website: https://tendersodisha.gov.in. Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.

Sd/- Engineer Member
BDA, Bhubaneswar
OIPR-13001/13033/1/25-26/0041

BANGALORE WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD

INVITATION FOR TENDERS (Through KPP Portal Only)

BWSSB invites tenders in two stage tender system from eligible contractors for the following works.

Sl. No.	Name of the Works	Amount put to Tender / EMD Amount
Office of the Chief Engineer (Central), 6th Floor, Cauvery Bhavan, K.G. Road, Bangalore - 560 009.		
IFT No.:BWSSB/CE(Central)/DCE(WWM-E&W)/TA-1/228/2025-26		Date:06.03.2026
1	Providing and Laying of 300mm dia DI K-9 pipeline to fill the eco-friendly treated water into the Doddanekkundi Lake from 5 MLD Kaggadasapura STP coming under the jurisdiction of EE(WWM-CV-1) Division.	Rs. 297.46 Lakhs / Rs. 4.46 Lakhs
For the above work, Last date for receipt of tenders: 07.04.2026 upto 16:00 Hrs. Technical Tenders will be opened on: 08.04.2026 at 17.00 Hrs.		
IFT No.:BWSSB/CE(Central)/DCE(WWM-E&W)/TA-1/230/2025-26		Date:06.03.2026
2	Providing and Laying of 300mm dia DI K-9 pipeline to fill the eco-friendly treated water into the Benniganahalli Lake from 5 MLD Kaggadasapura STP coming under the jurisdiction of EE(WWM-CV-1) Division.	Rs. 176.45 Lakhs / Rs. 2.64 Lakhs
IFT No.:BWSSB/CE(Central)/DCE(WWM-E&W)/TA-1/233/2025-26		Date:06.03.2026
3	Providing Services to Desilt sewer sub-main/Main lines through 02 Nos. of Truck mounted high capacity suction and jetting machines with sewege Water Re-cycling System Mounted on 25T GVW BS-IV Truck chassis for a period of 12 months under EE(WWM)-T.Valley Division. (Call-2).	Rs. 255.31 Lakhs / Rs.5.11 Lakhs
For the above works, Last date for receipt of tenders: 23.03.2026 upto 16:00 Hrs. Technical Tenders will be opened on: 24.03.2026 at 17.00 Hrs.		

Sd/- Chief Engineer(Central)

The details regarding the tender and participatin in the e-procurement process can be obtained by logging on to https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in For further details contact the above signed office during working hours.

DIPR/CP/JA/6076/2025-26

34001/160/2526
Mail ID: sepwdsbp@rediffmail.com

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER
NORTHERN (R&B) CIRCLE SAMBALPUR
e-Procurement
BID IDENTIFICATION No CCENC (R AND B)/21/2025-26
No. 1168 Dtd. 06.03.2026

1. The Chief Construction Engineer, Northern (R&B) Circle, Sambalpur on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites Percentage Rate bids in double cover system in ONLINE MODE for the construction of Road Works as detailed in the DTCN from the eligible class of contractors.
2. No of works= 09 (Nine) (Road Works)
3. Tender Cost: Rs. 10,000/-
4. Class of contractor: "B" Class, "A" Class and "Special" Class
5. Date & Time of available in website & receipt of Bids From 16.03.2026 to 17.00 Hours of 30.03.2026.
6. Date of opening of Technical Bid 31.03.2026 at 11.00 Hours.
7. The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in.
8. Any corrigendum / Addendum will be displayed in the website www.tendersodisha.gov.in.

Sd/- Chief Construction Engineer
Northern (R&B) Circle, Sambalpur
OIPR-34001/34035/1/25-26/0025

28001/4/2526

ODISHA SPACE APPLICATIONS CENTRE (ORSAC)
Dept of Science & Technology, Govt. of Odisha
Bhubaneswar-751023

Tender Notice No. 02/2026

Empanelment of Eligible Firms to undertake UAS/UAV/Drone Imaging Services in Odisha

Odisha Space Applications Centre (ORSAC) invites sealed Application from reputed, established and reliable Firms for Empanelment to undertake USA/ UAV/ Drone Imaging Services in Odisha.

ORSAC reserves the right to accept/reject/ modify & cancel the full tender or part thereof at any time without assigning any reason thereof.

For details, visit Website odisha.gov.in. & ORSAC Website orsac.odisha.gov.in or ORSAC office.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OIPR-28001/28007/1/25-26/0001

Monday | March 9, 2026

Bennett & Coleman
THE TIMES OF INDIA

www.educationtimes.com

Education TIMES

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THE PATH TO EXCELLENCE

Advertorial, Education Promotional Feature

NIFT artisan seat quota boosts craft community access amid awareness gap

The initiative will also equip students to add value to their family enterprises

Priyadarshini.Gupta
@timesofindia.com

Image generated by AI

Drawing on her family's roots in the bamboo craft community, Nidhi (name changed) is among a small but growing number of students admitted through the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT)'s supernumerary artisan quota, an initiative designed to make design education more inclusive while supporting traditional craft communities. Hailing from Bengaluru, Nidhi moved to Mumbai to pursue her studies at NIFT. Her mother, a registered artisan, not only practices bamboo craft but also collaborates with fellow artisans by sourcing their products and helping market them.

Currently, specialising in fashion communication, Nidhi learnt about the artisan quota during the application process. "Artisan seats do increase access and create opportunity; students from craft backgrounds may otherwise find it difficult to enter top design institutes," she says. Like Nidhi, Abha from Pune secured admission through the artisan quota. She fulfilled the eligibility criteria as her mother possessed an artisan card, issued for her work in fabric printing.

To connect traditional craft knowledge with modern industry skills, NIFT had introduced supernumerary seats for artisans and their wards across its campuses in 2019. The students come from diverse craft backgrounds, including weavers, handicraft artisans, and allied traditional craft communities. However, limited awareness remains a major barrier to the effective utilisation of these seats.

The policy aligns with NIFT's academic focus on craft integration. Ajit Kumar Khare, director, NIFT Mumbai, says, "Indian handicraft and local art have been systematically integrated into the curriculum of all programmes since 2016 under a craft policy supported by the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) and Development Commissioner (Handlooms) under the Ministry of Textiles. These engagements revealed that many artisan families required institutional support to sustain their traditions, especially as younger generations increasingly move away from crafts due to uncertain incomes."

The objective includes offering regular guidance and career counselling. "The initiative allows candidates from artisan families to access professional fashion and design training, creating opportunities for communities that possess strong craft knowledge but may lack exposure to formal academic options. By bringing them into structured design education, the institute hopes to bridge traditional skills with contemporary design practices," he adds.

Currently, NIFT operates 20 campuses nationwide, and each campus offers two supernumerary seats annually under this category. "Admission components are designed to be sensitive to the backgrounds and capabilities of artisan applicants, and supportive measures such as relaxed cut-off criteria and institutional guidance aim to reduce entry barriers," says Prof Khare.

Admissions under the category (2019-2025)

Year	Total Seats offered	Total candidates registered	Shortlisted by Committee with DC (HC) & (HC)	Total candidates admitted
2019	32	14	12	8
2020	34	25	15	8
2021	34	25	19	14
2022	36	30	21	12
2023	36	26	19	10
2024	38	24	21	15
2025	38	25	19	1

Source: NIFT

A total of 78 students have been admitted since the introduction of the quota in 2019

Since the introduction of the artisan category, as many as 78 artisans have been admitted to all NIFT campuses. Noopur Anand, dean (Academics), NIFT, Mumbai, says, "Students admitted under the category have the same opportunities as other graduates. The institute facilitates placements through its structured campus placement process. The graduates are also free to choose their own paths, whether pursuing professional roles, or returning to their family crafts and strengthening them with contemporary design knowledge and market exposure."

The eligibility requires applicants to belong to artisan families with valid certification, such as artisan cards issued by handicraft or handloom authorities, state departments, cooperatives, or recognised organisations.

Sushama Saitwal, associate professor, campus academic coordinator, NIFT Mumbai, says, "The category of artisans whose children apply spans varied spectrum of India's handloom and handicraft traditions, encompassing both widely practised crafts and vanishing art forms and many region-specific traditions that demand generations of cultural knowledge."

The breadth of academic programmes ensures that students from artisan families are not confined to their inherited skill sets but are empowered to reinterpret and expand them. Many artisans, especially those based in rural craft clusters and small towns, are either unaware of the provision or do not fully understand the admission process. Prof Saitwal says, "Few artisans are not willing to take the academic route fearing financial insecurity. Even when design interventions are suggested to improve products, artisans may hesitate to adopt them if there is no guaranteed market. Additionally, many artisans discourage their children from continuing traditional crafts because they perceive limited income potential in the sector. Another barrier is financial affordability, although scholarships exist, many artisan families are unaware of them. Obtaining artisan certification or proving eligibility may be complicated in regions where record-keeping systems are inconsistent."

NMC tightens noose on mushrooming of under-resourced medical colleges

Divyansh.Kumar
@timesofindia.com

All new medical colleges will have to maintain a corpus fund to get an approval from the National Medical Commission (NMC) for establishment and expansion. NMC plans to tighten the financial scrutiny and application compliance for new and existing medical colleges, for which the colleges will have to show financial feasibility. The policy might turn out to be a powerful legal tool to regulate mushrooming of under resourced medical colleges. This regulation will also tighten the noose over institutions that cite 'financial deficits' as a convenient excuse to deny mandatory stipends for interns and residents.

The colleges will be required to give an undertaking of financial viability, while MARB will retain the authority to revise mandated amount periodically

The exact amount of the corpus will be decided by the Medical Assessment and Rating Board (MARB), with the regulatory body retaining the authority to revise the mandated amount periodically. The draft provision extends this financial requirement to already functioning medical colleges as well. "The objective is not expansion control per se, but to ensure that only serious, adequately resourced institutions enter and remain in the system. Over the past decade, expansion of medical colleges has been a national priority to address doctor shortages. At the same time, quality, faculty stability, infrastructure continuity, and student protection remained non-negotiable. The proposed corpus mechanism is intended to ensure long-term financial sustainability, prevent disruption of academic activity, and safeguard the interests of students and trainees," NMC officials tell *Education Times*.

The number of medical colleges in the country has nearly doubled, rising from 387 in 2014 to more than 780 by 2024. During the same period, MBBS seats increased by over 130%, jumping from roughly 51,300 to more than 1.18 lakh. While the expansion has improved access to medical education, it has also exposed gaps in financial sustainability, infrastructure, and faculty availability.

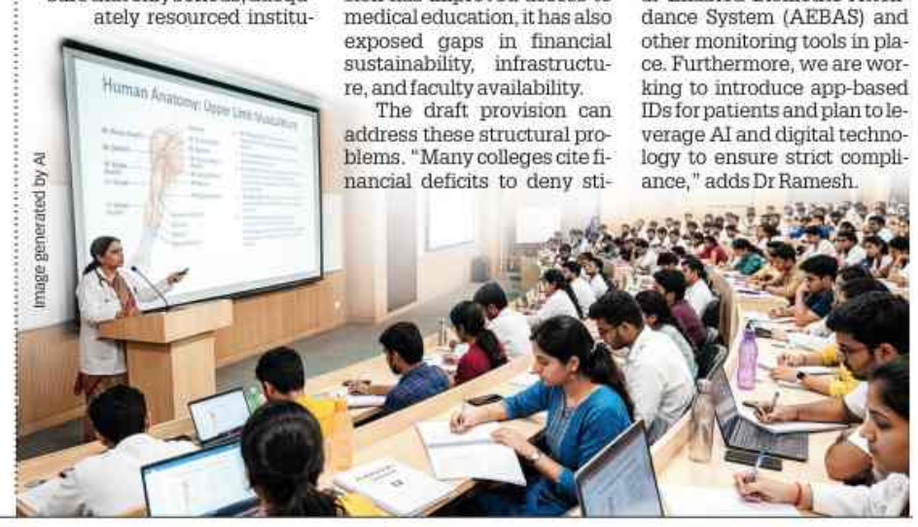
The draft provision can address these structural problems. "Many colleges cite financial deficits to deny stipends to interns and residents. If properly audited, this requirement can help ensure that institutions proving financial solvency are able to pay stipends," says Dr Sandeep Dagar, patron, (FAIMA).

The issue of unpaid or delayed stipends has been a recurring flashpoint across several states, with colleges frequently attributing the problem to fund constraints. "In the 2023 regulations on the establishment and expansion of medical institutions, a corpus fund was required for each medical college, but the exact amount was never specified, which was an oversight flagged by the Supreme Court. Henceforth, the medical colleges will have to give an undertaking on financial viability. NMC will soon deliberate and determine the appropriate amount to be maintained as a corpus fund," says Dr MK Ramesh, president, MARB.

Strict Compliance

The traditional practice of planned renewal inspections will be phased out. "NMC will conduct random, surprise inspections instead of standard renewal inspections. We already have introduced Aadhaar Enabled Biometric Attendance System (AEBAS) and other monitoring tools in place. Furthermore, we are working to introduce app-based IDs for patients and plan to leverage AI and digital technology to ensure strict compliance," adds Dr Ramesh.

Image generated by AI



Canadian universities seek to rebuild trust with Indian students

Canada is prioritising quality education and forging long-term partnerships with Indian institutions

Priyanka.Srivastava
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The country is also investing in attracting research talent and expanding technology-driven industries, including AI

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's visit to India started a new chapter in India-Canada academic partnership. With 13 new university partnerships, a $100 million scholarship initiative, and a focus on STEM and joint research, Canada has started off on a positive note. The collaborations emphasise industry-academic partnerships, facilitating 16-24-week research programmes for master's and PhD students with industry partners. Canadian universities are stepping up efforts to rebuild confidence among Indian students after a turbulent period marked by visa restrictions, policy uncertainty, and a sharp decline in enrolment of Indian students.

University leaders now say the sector is entering what they describe as a "new chapter", focused on restoring trust, prioritising quality education and building long-term partnerships with Indian institutions rather than relying solely on student mobility.

On the sidelines of recently concluded QS India Summit 2026 held in Goa in February, Gabriel Miller, president and CEO, Universities Canada, highlighted the need for reforms necessary to restore credibility after "a small group of profit-seeking private colleges were allowed to abuse the system", which ultimately harmed students and the reputation of Canadian higher education. The current phase is about stabilising the system and rebuilding confidence among students and families, he said.

"The strategy now is to rebuild trust," said Miller. "Canada's success in international education has always come from offering access to high-quality university education. We are returning to that foundation, while ensuring that the benefits of partnerships flow both ways," he added.

Canadian universities increasingly recognise India not merely as a source of international students but as a strategic partner in research, innovation and talent development. Future collaborations would include joint research initiatives, faculty exchanges, and partnerships within India, added Miller.

The shift comes as governments in India and Canada signal a willingness to repair relations following diplomatic tensions that had affected student mobility and academic partnerships. The visit by PM Carney could play a significant role in restoring policy stability and signalling renewed openness towards Indian students, said Prof Florentine Strzelczyk, provost and VP (Academic), Western University in London, Ontario.

Canadian institutions are actively working to deepen engagement with India through research collaborations, entrepreneurship initiatives and joint academic programmes. "We welcome several hundred Indian students every year, and we are here to expand and deepen our relationships with India," she said. "India today sees itself as a driver of education, not just a recipient, and our partnerships must reflect that," added Prof Strzelczyk.

Western University is exploring dual-degree and joint-degree models that allow students to complete part of their education in India and part in Canada, enabling mobility without requiring relocation. The varsity is also expanding scholarship opportunities for high-performing international students, while graduate students continue to receive funding for research programmes.

Canadian universities have also begun engaging more actively with India's emerging private universities alongside established institutions such as IITs and central universities. "Entrepreneurial approach and research ambitions of younger Indian universities make them attractive partners, particularly in tech innovation and startup ecosystems," added Prof Strzelczyk.

Joy Johnson, president and VC, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, underlined that international students remain central to Canada's academic and economic future as they contribute not only financially but also intellectually and culturally to campuses and research ecosystems. "International students are vital to Canada's universities, to our research enterprise and innovation economy," she said, adding that collaboration with countries like India strengthens talent pipelines and global research capacity.

Canada's labour market has been experiencing a decline since 2025, which is concerning for international students. Miller pointed out that while short-term job markets fluctuate globally, graduates of strong universities continue to benefit from higher lifetime earnings and career mobility. "Canada is also investing heavily in attracting research talent and expanding technology-driven industries, including Artificial Intelligence, (AI) where collaboration with India could be mutually beneficial," added Miller.

(The journalist was invited to attend the QS India Summit)

IMAGE GENERATED BY AI

IIT-H opens applications for SURE Internship 2026

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

IIT-H has opened applications for its Summer Undergraduate Research Exposure (SURE) Internship 2026. The programme offers undergraduate and PG students from across India an opportunity to participate in hands-on research at the institute. Applications are invited for 250 internships, of which 100 are reserved exclusively for girls. Selected interns will work closely with faculty members at IIT-H on research projects during the summer break. Interns can choose the duration of their internship: one month, 1.5 months, or 2 months. No additional amount or benefit will be provided beyond the stipend. Depending on the duration, interns will receive stipends: Rs 15,000 for two months, Rs 7,500 for one month, and Rs 10,000 for one and a half months. Candidates in first-year MSc, MA students, second and third-year BTech and BDes students, and third and fourth-year Integrated BTech-MTech students can apply. To qualify, applicants must be full-time students ranking in the top 20% of their respective cohorts, which must be certified by their institute's head. Interested students must apply exclusively through the official portal before the March 10, 2026 deadline.

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of our Beloved Founder Chairman
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CMN
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Approval awaited
18, Lingadheeranahalli, 'D' Group Employees Layout, Vishwaneedam Post,
Off. MAGADI MAIN ROAD, HEROHALLI, BENGALURU - 560 091.
commencing its academic operations from the year 2026-2027.
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• ELECTRONICS AND COMMUNICATION ENGINEERING
• ELECTRONICS AND COMPUTER ENGINEERING
• MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
• MASTER OF COMPUTER APPLICATION
09 March 2026
11.30 A.M. Onwards
Smt CHITRAKALA NAGARAJ
CHAIRPERSON & CO-FOUNDER
SCAN HERE FOR LOCATION
East West Academy
Rajajinagar
The Great Eastern International Public School
Magadi Road
East West International School
Mysuru
KUMBALAGODU, MYSURU ROAD
East West Independent P.U. College
(Powered by : Taproot Group of PU Colleges)
SCIENCE / COMMERCE
(PCMB, PCMCS - EBACS, EBAS)
East West Business School
BBA / BCA / B.Com
East West Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences
B PHARM
East West School of Nursing
GNM
S.V.N. College of Nursing
B.Sc (N), PB B.Sc (N), M.Sc (N)
Madhu School of Nursing
GNM
The Great Eastern P.U. College
(Powered by : Taproot Group of PU Colleges)
SCIENCE / COMMERCE
(PCMB, PCMCS - EBACS, EBAS)
Magadi Road
East West Sports Academy
Bengaluru - Mysuru
East West Cricket Academy
Yeshwanthpur / Magadi Road
Mr. C N SHASHIKIRAN
SECRETARY

CLOSE WATCH

Some 'little red dots' observed by James Webb Telescope and believed to be small galaxies or active black holes could well be 'monster stars' with a million times the mass of the Sun, say researchers at Harvard & Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics.

SCIENCE OF THE TIMES

QUICK QUIZ

So far, scientists have believed that Tyrannosaurus rex took 25 years to reach its full size (around 8 tonnes). A new analysis of growth rings in fossilised T rex legs shows it took longer. How many years did T rex take to attain its full growth? Send your answers to **scienceofthetimes@timesofindia.com**

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2026

To Be Heard Over Man-Made Sounds, This Arabian Sea Mammal Is Communicating In New Ways

How noisy ships change dolphins' language

U.Tejonmayam @timesofindia.com

In the deep waters of the eastern Arabian Sea, bottlenose dolphins (Tursiops truncatus) are changing the way they communicate to bond, hunt, navigate and signal danger. The reason: Not to get drowned in the noise from ships and other human activity.

One of the world's busiest maritime corridors, the region sees a steady passage of container ships, tankers and bulk carriers linking the Persian Gulf, India and East Asia. Beneath this traffic, dolphins depend on whistles, clicks and other vocal signals for social coordination and survival. A new acoustic study by the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai shows this balance is being disrupted.

The researchers, who analysed passive acoustic data over six months, found that when vessels were present, dolphin whistles shifted to higher frequencies, became longer in duration, with fewer inflection points compared to quieter periods. "Their whistles became less complex," said R Kannan, first author of the study published in Acoustics Australia.

The study suggests that when ship noise overlaps with the frequency bands dolphins use to communicate, they shift the pitch and length of the calls to compensate for background noise. Scientists call it the Lombard effect.

The study also found dolphins whistled less frequently when ships were present, and whistle diversity declined, with the descending-ascending contour type dominating under noisy conditions.

Some scientists call for more studies. Marine biologist Isha Bopardikar from the Foundation for Ecological Research, Advocacy and Learning (FERAL) cautions against attributing the vocal changes of dolphins solely to noise. "While whistles do occur in the same/similar frequency bands as some shipping noise, shifts can also be due to different behaviour, group sizes. This calls for focal studies with concurrent behavioural observations."

She notes that prolonged exposure to elevated noise can impact marine life. "Chronic noise exposure can affect fine-scale acoustic communication of such mammals. If a dolphin gives out a less complex signal than normal, it means less information," she said, adding that this could potentially affect communication between a mother dolphin and its calf, as also synchronised behaviours.

Similar behavioural shifts have been documented in other places. In 1999, research in Canada's St Lawrence River found that beluga whales altered their vocal behaviour in the presence of vessel noise. A 2014 study in Portugal's Sado estuary reported acoustic changes in bottlenose dolphins near operating vessels, while research published in 2013 in the northern Adriatic Sea linked leisure boating to dolphin displacement. In 2018, studies in the US showed dolphins simplifying calls in noisy environments, and work in Danish waters found that high vessel noise disrupted foraging in harbour porpoises. Humpback whales off Hawaii were shown in 2020 to increase call intensity as ambient ocean noise rose.

What distinguishes the Arabian Sea study is its focus on a heavily trafficked commercial shipping corridor rather than coastal tourism hotspots. Vessel noise here is continuous and intense, making mitigation more complex.

Globally, underwater radiated noise from shipping has become a growing concern for the International Maritime Organization (IMO). In 2014, IMO adopted voluntary guidelines to reduce underwater noise from commercial ships, but they were not mandatory. Revised guidelines released in 2023 remain non-binding, even as IMO has set a goal of reducing average shipping noise by three decibels by 2030, a target experts say will be difficult to meet without enforceable measures.

Proposed mitigation strategies include designing quieter propellers, improving hull design to reduce cavitation, installing vibration-dampening systems, reducing vessel speeds in ecologically sensitive zones, rerouting traffic away from key foraging habitats of marine life, and developing noise management plans at ports.

"We cannot stop the growing shipping traffic. But we can identify marine foraging regions and take measures to keep the waters calmer to protect the marine mammals," says Prof G V V Pavan Kumar of the School of Naval Architecture and Ocean Engineering at the Indian Maritime University.

LOUDER SEAS

Since 1950s global low-frequency ocean noise has increased by 10–16 decibels

SHIP NOISES
WHISTLES, BLASTS | Foghorns of ships make high-decibel sound
THRUMMING | Rotation of propellers causes bubbles to break, producing loud thrumming and humming
RUMBLE | Ship engines make a constant, heavy, low-frequency rumble; the older the ship, the louder the noise
CREAKING | Metal structure flexing against waves, especially in rough seas
HYDRAULIC WHINE | High-pitched sounds from steering gears, thrusters or mooring winches during docking
FLOW NOISE | Sound of water rushing along the hull
Animals modify their vocal signals to remain audible in noisy environments; scientists call it the Lombard effect

DOLPHIN SOUNDS

- Whistles help them communicate with other dolphins
- Clicks are used for echolocation to find prey and objects
- Each dolphin has a 'signature whistle', like a name
- Click trains reveal the distance, size and shape of objects
- Tail slaps, jumps and touch also send signals
- Sound travels faster and farther underwater
- Dolphin whistles can reach 20kHz, the upper limit of human hearing

WHAT CAN BE DONE

- Quieter propeller design
- Reduced ship speeds in sensitive zones
- Rerouting from key habitats
- Port-level noise management plans

Found in Antarctic lake, red microbe holds big promise

Bacterium Shows Mechanisms That May Help Us Make New Meds, Fight Pollution

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Scientists from the National Centre for Cell Science (NCCS) in Pune have identified a previously unknown species of bacterium collected from the ice-cold sediments of an Antarctic lake — a microbe so tough it can survive 85 minutes of direct ultraviolet radiation that would kill most living cells.

The sample containing the organism, now named Deinococcus pantiae, was collected in 2019 during India's 38th scientific expedition to Antarctica, from a lake in the Schirmacher Oasis, Queen Maud Land, where temperatures plunge below zero, nutrients are almost non-existent, and UV radiation is intense.

The microbe's name honours Aditi Pant, the first Indian woman scientist to visit Antarctica, in 1983. The bacterium's genome revealed biological pathways that could produce vitamins, generate natural antioxidants, and break down pollutants — capabilities with potential in medicine, manufacturing, and environment cleanup.

"Naming the organism after Pant is an important way to acknowledge and celebrate women in science," said Avinash Sharma, senior scientist, NCCS, who led the research."

The bacterium is a tiny red-pigmented sphere, less than 1.3 micrometres across. "It carries a sophisticated biological toolkit. We found multiple overlapping defense systems that explain how it endures conditions fatal to most other life forms," said Sharma.

The red pigment comes from carotenoids — natural antioxidants that shield the cell from UV damage. Beneath it is a full arsenal of DNA repair genes, internal production of glutathione — one of nature's most powerful antioxidants — and pathways for trehalose, a sugar known to protect cells against freezing, desiccation, and radiation.

The genome also contained pathways for producing folic acid (vitamin B9) internally — valuable for sustainable bio-based vitamin manufacturing — and the ability to break down benzoate compounds, a class of aromatic pollutants common in industrial waste.

SAMPLING: Avinash Sharma collects samples to isolate the bacteria

"That last capability raises the possibility of using the bacterium or its enzymes in environmental cleanup operations," Sharma said. "Climate change is reshaping polar habitats faster than science can document them, and some microbes which are suited only for the old conditions may vanish before they are found."

The research, funded by the Science and Engineering Research Board of the Union govt, has been published in the International Journal of Systematic and Evolutionary Microbiology. The research team includes Namrata Jiya, Wormirm Khudai, Bhavuk Gupta, along with Dr Sharma at BRIC-NCCS, Pune, in collaboration with CSIR-Institute of Microbial Technology, Chandigarh.

LAST WEEK'S QUICK QUIZ **Question on Mar 02:** Who was the Soviet physicist who was behind the biggest nuclear device test and later won the 1975 Nobel Peace Prize? **Answer:** Andrei Sakharov

TIMES NATION

Insult not only to President but also to Constitution: PM

▶Continued from P 1

Today, when the country is celebrating the achievements of its mothers, sisters and daughters on International Women's Day, yesterday (Saturday) in West Bengal the TMC govt gravely insulted the President," Modi said.

Referring to the 9th International Santhali Conclave held in Siliguri on Saturday, Modi alleged that the state govt failed to organise the event properly and that TMC boycotted the programme. "President Droupadi Murmu herself comes from the tribal community. Instead of honouring her and celebrating this important tribal event, TMC govt left the programme in a state of mismanagement," he said.

"This is not only an insult to the President, but also an insult to the Constitution, the spirit of the Constitution and the great traditions of our democracy," Modi said.

Warning TMC, the prime minister said, "The dirty politics and arrogance of power shown by TMC in insulting a tribal President will soon be shattered."

The controversy began after Murmu expressed disappointment over the arrangements during her visit to attend the conclave

The controversy began after President Droupadi Murmu expressed disappointment over the arrangements during her visit to attend the conclave, stating that the venue had been changed to a location that made it difficult for members of the tribal community to attend and noting the absence of the CM or any state minister to receive her.

Bengal being singled out ahead of polls: Didi

▶Continued from P 1

The PM attacks and disrespects Bengal before every election," said the CM. Mamata alleged that Bengal was being singled out ahead of the assembly polls.

She insisted the state had written to the organisers of the International Santal Conference on March 4, citing its inability to be part of the event due to various reasons. "But the Centre ignored it. If anything went wrong at the event, the Centre should be held responsible. Don't blame us," she said.

The Siliguri conference, the CM insisted, was a private programme the state govt had never been asked to support. On allegations about inadequate toilets and other facilities, she said the venue was under the Airport Authority of India's jurisdiction. "The green room, too, had been set up by the organisers in AAI territory. If anything went wrong there, it is their failure."

On the PM invoking International Women's Day while criticising how Bengal treated a woman President, Mamata said, "We will celebrate Women's Day a thousand times. We have been celebrating it since our childhood. You do not have the right to criticise us."

Chief secretary Nandini Chakravorty, who received a communication from Union home secretary Govind Mohan seeking an explanation for the "protocol breach", formally responded in the evening, sources said.

The controversy appeared to unite the opposition behind TMC. Congress's Supriya Shrinate said the President's office must not be used to "advance BJP's political agenda".

BJP: Mamata has become 'law unto herself'

New Delhi: West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee has become a "law unto herself", BJP said Sunday, claiming that her allegation that the party was using President Droupadi Murmu for political reasons stemmed from a guilty conscience. "It is shameful and nonsense to comment that we are using the President," BJP's Ravi Shankar Prasad said, emphasising that there was nothing political about the Santhal conference Murmu was attending in West Bengal, which sparked the controversy.

Mamata now fears that Santhals are angry over the way she treated the President and the way the tribal event was organised, and this is behind her allegations, he said.

He said the CM should stop talking about saving the Constitution if she "cannot respect" the President of the country. "Under Mamata Banerjee's rule, only 'ghuspaithiye' (infiltrators) are welcomed. Doors are open for them," Prasad said. TNN

Bihar dy CM to meet Shah ahead of govt formation

Patna: Amid fast-developing political developments in Bihar, deputy chief minister and home minister Samrat Choudhary on Sunday left for West Bengal, where he was also likely to meet Union home minister Amit Shah later in the day in Kolkata.

The upcoming Rajya Sabha elections in Bihar are expected to be high on the agenda during Shah's meeting with Choudhary. The meeting also comes ahead of the scheduled govt formation in Bihar where the BJP is likely to have its own CM, reports **Abhay Singh**.

RS polls are due on March 16. Although there are five Rajya Sabha seats on which the elections would be held, there are six nominees in the fray, including RLM chief Upendra Kushwaha as the third candidate of the BJP.

Facing the music: Oli's tabla gift to Balen 4yrs ago turns into irony

Vishant.Agarwala @timesofindia.com

In June 2022, Oli gifted newly elected Kathmandu mayor Balen Shah a metal tabla after his clay one broke while shifting. On Saturday night, he reposted the old picture while congratulating him

Kathmandu: In June 2022, soon after Balendra 'Balen' Shah took his first step from the hip hop scene into public office, becoming Kathmandu's youngest mayor at 32, former PM KP Sharma Oli — then UML chairman and leader of Opposition — gifted him a tabla. Months later, speaking at the Nepal Literature Festival in Pokhara on Dec 23, 2022, he narrated the story, saying he had learnt that "Balen's clay tabla had broken while shifting to the capital and so gave him an unbreakable metal one".

That old exchange returned with biting irony Saturday night. After the final Jhapa-5 result showed Balen defeating him by 68,348 votes to 18,734, a margin of almost 50,000, Oli congratulated him on social media, sharing the old photograph from their 2022 meeting — the same meeting at which he had gifted him the metal tabla.

In the post, he wished 'Balen Babu' a successful five-year term. That was also where one of Oli's most striking lines about Balen resurfaced. "If he continues his riyaaz, he can do well," Oli had said then. "Just as music requires discipline and riyaaz (training), so does politics. If he keeps working at both, he can grow into a good artist, a good public figure and a good politician." Oli had also explained the warmth behind the gesture. "We have known each other for some time, and he has visited my home on a few occasions."

As Balen's popularity rose and Oli increasingly came to embody the old order that many wanted to swept aside, the relationship deteriorated sharply.

By the time the Jhapa-5 campaign began, the cordiality had given way to a bitter personal contests.

Nishant promises to strengthen organisation

▶Continued from P 1

Wearing a white kurta-pyjama and flip-flops, he was inducted by party national working president Sanjay Kumar Jha, who handed him the membership slip at a programme attended by senior functionaries. The alumnus of BIT Mesra had kept distance from politics until his 75-year-old father decided to move to Rajya Sabha after serving 10 terms as CM over roughly two decades.

Addressing workers in his first speech as a party member, **Nishant Kumar** promised to strengthen the organisation and justify the trust placed in him. "I will try my best to live up to expectations of workers, party and public," he said.

Nishant called his father's decision a personal choice respected by family and said he would continue working under his guidance. He credited his father for Bihar's development. "People will not forget his contribution," he said to loud applause.

Soft-spoken and reserved, Nishant rarely interacted with media. After joining the party, he offered prayers at Mahavir Mandir in Patna, visited a tomb near Patna high court and distributed sweets to reporters. "Ishwar, Allah and Waheguru, all are same," he said.

Opposition reacted sharply. RJD chief Lalu Prasad's daughter Rohini Acharya mocked Nitish's long criticism of dynastic politics. "Chacha ji... where has your hollow argument on dynasty politics disappeared? There has always been a big gap between your words and actions," she wrote on X, adding Nitish represented "political and ideological contradictions".

Congress Rajya Sabha MP Akhilesh Prasad Singh welcomed Nishant's entry but said Nitish himself should answer questions on dynasty politics.

Nishant's debut places him in a long line of children of Bihar CMs who entered politics. Lalu Prasad and Rabri Devi's family has one of the largest political footprints, with several of their nine children active in politics. Lalu's youngest son Tejashwi Prasad Yadav served two terms as deputy CM and leads the opposition in assembly, while Tej Pratap Yadav formed a new party, Janshakti Janata Dal, in 2025 after a family rift.

Santosh Kumar Suman, son of former CM Jitan Ram Manjhi, serves as a cabinet minister. Nitish Mishra, son of former CM Jagannath Mishra, is a BJP MLA and former cabinet minister.

One ballot at a time: Why Nepal's counting moves at a snail's pace

Vishant.Agarwala @timesofindia.com

Kathmandu: In Nepal's vote counting rooms, the pace is set by a single sheet of paper. A ballot is lifted from the pile, unfolded and held up. Party representatives lean forward. One looks closely at the mark. Another nods. Only after everyone in the room is satisfied does the counting officer place it on the right stack and reach for the next one.

Then the next ballot paper is picked and the ritual is repeated. If a mark is faint, the room slows. If a representative wants another look, the ballot is raised again. "If one representative objects later, the whole room can stop," an election official said. "So everyone watches every ballot."

In post-Sept 2025 Nepal, where the uprising left 77 people dead and brought down the previous dispensation, speed is being sacrificed for legitimacy.

TOI in nepal

The burden of that caution is huge. Nepal has 189 lakh registered voters, and every voter casts two separate ballots — one for the 165 first-past-the-post seats and another for the 110 proportional representation seats in the 275-member House. With turnout estimated at around 60%, officials are now dealing with more than 2.2 crore ballot papers across the two categories.

The delay starts even before the first sheet is opened. Ballot boxes from remote mountain districts must first be brought in, and in Nepal that still means bad roads, blocked passes, poor weather and, in some places, air support. Only after the boxes arrive can the count settle into its slow, repetitive rhythm.

That is why the Nepal Election Commission's early hopes of a quick finish slipped almost immediately.

Even 60 hours after counting began, the results were still not final.

UPSC TOPPER

TN Dy Collector Rajeshwari Suve M secures AIR 2 in UPSC CSE 2025

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Rajeshwari Suve M from Vadipatti in Madurai district of Tamil Nadu has emerged as the female topper, securing All India Rank (AIR) 2 in the UPSC Civil Services Examination (CSE) 2025 in her fifth attempt.

Rajeshwari was serving as a deputy collector (Training) in the Tamil Nadu government while preparing for the examination. She had appeared for the Civil Services Preliminary Examination five times before achieving the milestone this year. Before clearing the Civil Services Examination, Rajeshwari had also topped the Tamil Nadu Public Service Commission (TNPSC) Group I Examination. For the civil services examination, she chose Sociology as her optional subject.

Rajeshwari Suve M

An Electrical Engineering graduate from Anna University, Chennai, Rajeshwari completed her degree in 2018. Her engineering background helped her develop analytical and problem-solving skills that proved useful during her preparation. Her father is a businessman, while her mother serves as an associate professor at a govt institution. The emphasis on education and discipline at home played an important role in shaping her interest public service.

IISER Aptitude Test attracts aspirants looking beyond JEE and NEET for pure science

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While engineering and medical entrance examinations such as JEE and NEET dominate India's competitive exam landscape, IISER Aptitude Test (IAT) is steadily gaining ground as a national science entrance exam. This also indicates a renewed interest among students in basic science and research-led education.

IAT is the national entrance exam conducted for admission to 5-year BS-MS dual degree and 4-year BS programmes at 7 IISERs, IISc Bengaluru, and IIT Madras. IIT Guwahati and IACS, Kolkata, and IIEST, Shibpur are the latest to accept IAT scores. The number of candidates appearing for IAT has increased significantly, growing from roughly 50,000 registrations in 2023, to 90,000 in 2024 and to over 1.5 lakh registrations in 2025.

Important Dates	
Last Date to Apply	April 13, 2026
Exam Date	June 7, 2026

Changing Perceptions

For years, pure sciences have often been viewed as a fallback option for students who could not secure seats in engineering or medicine. Academic experts claim that perception is gradually changing. Santanu Bhattacharya, director, IISER Tirupati, says, "Interest in IAT has been growing alongside JEE Main and NEET UG as an increasing number of students are seeking direct pathways of getting into fundamental science and research-based careers. The rising reputation of IISERs in view of their world-class infrastructure, strong global visibility and recognition of its research publications and significant PhD and postdoctoral placements internationally and across India, and early hands-on exposure to research through lab rotations and thesis work have enhanced its appeal. With IAT now serving as the unified national admission route to all IISERs and several other institutions, it has emerged as India's dedicated undergraduate-level entrance examination for science education and research. In the long run, this will benefit students thanks to flexible specialisation, strong research training, global academic mobility, and diverse career opportunities across academia, industry, and government sectors."

Despite the growing interest, awareness about IAT is still lower compared to exams such as JEE and NEET. Prof Bhattacharya says, "This gap mainly arose from historical visibility differences. IITs and medical colleges have been household names for decades, while IISERs are relatively young institutions established only in the last 10-20 years. As a result, students in metropolitan coaching ecosystems often hear about IAT, while those in smaller towns and rural schools may not be aware of the IISER pathway early in their academic journeys."

However, the situation is improving as the IISER system matures and produces a strong alumni network. Ashok Kumar Ganguli, director, IISER Berhampur, says, "IISERs are now nearly 20 years old, with the first campuses in Kolkata and Pune established in 2006. Over time, alumni have demonstrated the high-quality education and advanced research possible at IISERs, and their achievements are spreading awareness among students."

Prof Ganguli adds that IITs also became widely recognised among the public only after their alumni began contributing to the global economy over several decades. He says, "Covid-19 pandemic also reinforced the importance of scientific research, particularly in the life sciences, which has contributed to greater interest in fundamental science careers. Another factor is the growing acceptance of IAT as a national science entrance test, as more premier institutions begin to adopt it for undergraduate admissions. What makes IAT attractive is that it offers a science-first pathway, unlike the default preparation tracks that are heavily engineering or medicine-oriented," says Prof Ganguli.

To address the awareness gap, IISERs have intensified outreach across the country. Faculty members and student teams conduct school visits, science camps and orientation programmes in tier-II and III cities as well as rural districts to explain career opportunities in basic sciences. Prof Bhattacharya says online initiatives have also expanded the exam's reach.

The expansion of IAT to include admissions to science programmes beyond IISERs is expected to strengthen India's talent pipeline. Prof Bhattacharya says, "Students interested in Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics or Biology previously had to prepare for multiple entrance examinations. With institutions such as IIT-M, IIT-G, IISc, IACS and IIEST joining the system, students can now access a wider spectrum of science and interdisciplinary programmes through a single national aptitude test. The move could also reduce science students tendency to drift towards engineering."

St Francis College hosts Carnivalesque-26

Carnivalesque-25, the national inter-college championship, was held recently at St Francis College in Koramangala, Bengaluru. The event was inaugurated by Ramesh B, registrar (Evaluation), Dr Manmohan Singh Bengaluru City University, Bengaluru. In his inaugural address, Ramesh B highlighted that platforms such as Carnivalesque nurture confidence, leadership, and innovation. Bro Xavier Alexander, provincial and chairman, encouraged students to pursue excellence with passion and discipline. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Bro Titus Anto, director; RN Subba Rao, principal; Karthik P, Evening College principal; the faculty, staff, and students of the college. Around 2,300 students from 135 colleges across India competed in over 40 events spanning cultural, literary, and fine arts categories. Jyothi Nivas College, Bengaluru, emerged as the overall champion.

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Department of Business Administration NIT, Kurukshetra is seeking applications from bright aspirants for admission into 2-years full time MBA Programme for the session 2026-28. Admission is based on the weightages of valid score of CAT/CMAT/MAT/XAT or any other National Level Test held between June 2025 to May 2026 and performance in GD and PI to be held in the Institute.

Application form and other information can be downloaded from the Institute Website: **www.nitkkr.ac.in.** The last date for the submission of completed application form is **5th May, 2026**.

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Ultra-low dose of cancer meds works, reduces costs by 90%, finds Tata study

Malathy.Iyer@timesofindia.com

SMALL DOSAGE, MORE EFFECTIVE, FEWER SIDE-EFFECTS
CANCER AND TREATMENT
➤ In cancer, some cells grow uncontrollably and destroy body tissues
➤ Cancer causes nearly one in six deaths across the world
➤ The mainstays of cancer treatment are surgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy
NEWER THERAPIES | IMMUNOTHERAPY
➤ In the last decade, immunotherapy emerged
➤ Immunotherapy involves using the body's immune system to attack cancer cells
➤ A type of immunotherapy called 'immune checkpoint inhibitors' is used in cancers of the lung, kidney, bladder, melanoma and lymphomas
➤ An example of immunotherapy is CAR-T cell therapy used to treat blood cancers
➤ Immunotherapies costs lakhs of rupees per month, with companies offering 1+1 deals on a month's purchase
THE LATEST STUDY
In 'The Journal of Clinical Oncology', Tata Memorial Hospital researchers have detailed their latest "dose optimisation" trial
➤ In a Phase III randomised clinical trial of 500 patients, they found an ultra-low dose of checkpoint inhibitor nivolumab
➤ This ultra-low dose improved overall survival, reduced severe side-effects compared to standard chemotherapy
➤ Most patients had relapsed cancers and had received one prior line of therapy; 29% had two or more
➤ Head and neck cancers made up 52% of cases; lung cancers 36%
➤ Patients were randomised to nivolumab 20mg intravenously every 2 weeks or chemotherapy
➤ Median overall survival was 5.88 months with nivolumab compared with 4.7 months with chemotherapy
➤ One-year overall survival was 27.3% in the nivolumab arm versus 16.9% with chemotherapy
➤ Fewer adverse events were noted as compared to the chemotherapy group
A month's treatment with nivolumab could cost over ₹4 lakh, but using 1/10th the dosage reduced the cost to ₹18,000

Mumbai: Doctors in India are increasingly testing "dose optimisation" to make high-cost treatments affordable while cutting side-effects, and Tata Memorial Hospital's latest findings underline how big the impact can be.

The Parel-based premier cancer hospital found that giving one-tenth of the standard dosage of a modern anti-cancer treatment drug worked just as effectively and caused fewer side-effects. Their research proves that the monthly bill for the drug—part of the newest branch of anti-cancer treatment called immunotherapy—could thus drop from Rs 4.4 lakh to Rs 18,700.

Ultra-Low Dosage

"This is an ultra-low dosage of an immunotherapy drug called nivolumab that is increasingly being used for multiple cancers, including head and neck and lungs," said the study's senior author Dr Kumar Prabhash.

In the world's largest randomised study on nivolumab, conducted on 500 patients with previously treated or advanced disease, one-year overall survival was 27.3% in the nivolumab group versus 16.9% with standard chemotherapy. Infections, diarrhoea and hospitalisations were lower with nivolumab, said the article published in the Journal of Clinical Oncology.

"Around 80% of patients around the world can't use such drugs because of the price tag. We are trying to find the least possible dose that is most effective," said Dr Prabhash. In drug discovery, the practice is usually the opposite: to find the maximum tolerable dose, usually a level below the "toxic" mark, to ensure it works against the said disease.

When Lesser Is More

The nivolumab experiment is only the latest of low-cost adaptations of expensive medicines and treatment protocols seen in the country in the past few years. Fewer vaccine shots and reduced dosage of tuberculosis drugs are the most prominent of these efforts, though such efforts are more often seen in cancer due to the high cost of medications. "Dose optimisation" is a term that doctors in India and Canada worked on to improve access to effective cancer medicines for years.

Immunotherapy also saw experiments on shorter treatment duration to reduce costs. In 2022, at the Immuno-Oncology Society of India's 2nd Annual National Congress, oncologists from 13 Indian centres reported that shortening immunotherapy from the Western norm of 2 years to 6 to 8 months still delivered meaningful outcomes, with around 42% of participants showing clinical benefit.

One-Dose HPV Vaccine

Outside cancer, the same cost-and-toxicity logic is shaping public health decisions. One example is India's newly launched HPV vaccination drive—girls in the 14-15 age group will receive a single dose of the vaccine, though children in the US and the UK get 2 shots.

"Due to a trial held in India, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has data that proves that taking even 1 shot of the HPV creates enough antibodies as 2 or 3 shots," said Dr Nitin Shah of the Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP). Fifteen years back, the Indian govt stopped 3 ongoing trials on the HPV vaccine after a few girls in tribal belts in Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh died after receiving the vaccine. "Investigations later revealed that the deaths occurred due to other diseases or suicide," said Dr Shah.

However, 3 distinct groups emerged due to the stoppage:

TIMES Special

girls who got only 1 shot, those who got 2 shots, and another who got 3 shots. With the 15-year evidence, the IARC and the World Health Organisation last year announced that even 1 dosage would work as efficiently. In India's private sector, doctors still prefer to give 2 or 3 shots of up to Rs 11,000 each to girls under 14 years, but the IAP will soon announce that 1 dose would work for girls under 20 years of age (2 doses for those over 20).

Tuberculosis care is also moving towards safer, optimised dosing. India launched the BPaL-M regimen in March 2025 after a 3-year trial, focusing on reducing the toxicity associated with antibiotic linezolid.

One of the objectives of the national technical team of TB experts was to reduce the toxicity of one of the antibiotics, linezolid, which was associated with myelosuppression (low blood cell counts), neuropathy, serotonin syndrome, and lactic acidosis. The 3-year trial showed that instead of giving 600 mg of linezolid daily for 6 months, Indians did well with 600 mg for 13 weeks, followed by 300 mg for the rest of the treatment period.

But...

Despite the innovations to reduce costs and side-effects, experts said that such efforts rarely reached patients getting treated at private hospitals. "We are looking for cost-effective medication, something that is needed at the ground level, something that the middle classes will benefit from," said Dr Rajendra Badwe, former director of Tata Memorial Centre.

The benefits from these experiments are confined to the public sector only. The industry, for one, rarely 'adapts' to the minimum effective dose findings, sticking to the dosages cleared in the first trial and regulatory clearances.

Consider a long-term trial by TMC director Dr Sudeep Gupta on an expensive antibody drug called trastuzumab, given to patients with HER2-positive breast cancer for 12 months as supportive therapy. Generic versions of the drug then cost Rs 4-5 lakh for the 21-month course. Dr Gupta's study published in JAMA in 2020 showed that the outcome of 3 months of the medicine was no different from the 1-year course. While Tata Memorial Hospital followed this protocol for long, said Dr Badwe, not all in the private sector did.

From Harley Davidson to gold coins, Hyd developers go all out to woo homebuyers

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Hyderabad: Amid sluggish sales, several developers in Hyderabad are offering expensive gifts, from premium motorcycles to 24-carat gold coins, to woo prospective homebuyers. Also on offer are electric vehicles, complimentary interior work and modern fixtures.

A leading developer, for instance, has promised every buyer a Rs 3 lakh-worth Harley Davidson with their booking in select projects in prime pockets. Another developer is offering every confirmed client in an upcoming residential project an EV worth Rs 8 lakh.

Gold too has become a popular return gift, irrespective of its exorbitant price. A builder from Miyapur has promised buyers Rs 3 lakh worth of this precious metal on purchase of every ready-to-move-in apartment — 2BHK or 3BHK priced between Rs 75 lakh and Rs 85 lakh. This, along with free interiors for children's bedrooms and a modular kitchen.

And this trend isn't limited to residential projects in the city. Some builders developing open plots in Mahabubnagar too are using similar marketing tactics — with one of them giving away 10-gram gold coins to every client.

Industry insiders say these are desperate measures to accelerate sales, given the slowdown in the market. "Whenever the market slows down, developers introduce special deals to offload unsold inventory. In most cases, the cost of these freebies is factored into the project pricing, though buyers may not be aware of the calculations," Ch Ramchandra Reddy, joint secretary, Credai-National.

Realtors say it's not a healthy or sustainable trend in the real estate market. "You cannot keep attracting buyers with freebies forever. If a customer genuinely wants to purchase a flat, he will do so based on location, quality and price, not because of a gift. While such schemes are primarily aimed at boosting short-term sales and clearing unsold inventory, these may only generate temporary interest," said N Praveen, president, Telangana State Realtors Association.

The fact that such deals do not fall under the purview of the Telangana Real Estate Regulatory Authority (TG-RERA) also takes away the safety net from customers, say some realtors.

"Such schemes and incentives are aimed at commercially attracting buyers, we cannot monitor them," confirmed a TG-RERA official.

Pan-India I-T survey on 70 restaurants in 'evasion' probe

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Hyderabad: I-T sleuths on Sunday launched a pan-India survey of around 70 restaurants, including some in Delhi and Mumbai, to scan alleged billing software manipulation for suppression of sales and lower tax payments.

The sales concealment for the 70 outlets is around Rs 700 crore, part of a wider understatement of Rs 70,000 crore linked to such billing manipulation by restaurants across the country, officials said.

The 70 outlets, surveyed on directives of Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), were spread across 45 cities, from Madurai to Shimla and Godhra to Guwahati, apart from Delhi and Mumbai.

The nationwide action followed an earlier crackdown in Telangana where inspections and surveys were conducted in about 40 restaurants, with suspected sales understatement of over Rs 490 crore.

According to income tax and CBDT sources, Hyderabad was among the first locations where investigators began examining the issue. Hyderabad I-T officials initially conducted searches on a chain of biryani restaurants and later scanned several establishments, uncovering myriad methods to suppress revenues.

Investigators found that in some cases, certain cash transactions were allegedly deleted from the software at the end of the month to reduce declared income and, therefore, reduce income tax and GST payments. Another alleged ploy detected during the probe involved declaring only a limited percentage of revenue in I-T returns, assuming there would be no inspections.

Acid attack in hospital leaves woman injured

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Gurgaon: A woman suffered more than 25% burns after a man allegedly threw acid on her inside the casualty ward of Civil Hospital in Sector 10 on Sunday evening. She suffered burns on her face, neck and hand, doctors said. The accused fled after the incident that took place around 8.30pm when Samoli Das (32) arrived at the hospital along with him.

According to hospital officials, the woman entered the casualty ward and was about to consult doctors, when the man suddenly attacked her. Emergency head Dr Om Parkash said, "Before she could even mention what she wanted to get checked, the man threw acid on her and fled. No one could understand what happened."Cops have launched an investigation.

Portuguese national booked for voter roll fraud

Times News Network

Vasco: An FIR was registered against a woman from Vasco, who holds Portuguese nationality, for allegedly misleading govt authorities by submitting a forged document as genuine and fraudulently enrolling her name in the 25-Vasco assembly electoral roll constituency, thereby committing forgery.

Mamlatdar of Mormugao taluka, Pravinjay Pandit, who was also the assistant electoral registration officer for Vasco constituency, stated in his complaint that Elizabeth Luis from Bhuteabhat, Vasco, deliberately suppressed the information of her Portuguese nationality by declaring and submitting an enumeration form during the Special Intensive Revision of voter rolls conducted by Election Commission of India. The form was submitted before mamlatdar of Mormugao through the Booth Level Officer of Mormugao Municipal Council.

80k watching him live, YouTuber crashes SUV into divider; critical

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Police suspect the SUV was being driven at 150-160kmph

Ghaziabad: Bigg Boss 17 contestant and YouTuber Anurag Dobhal (28) — popularly known as 'UK07 Rider' — is in a critical condition after his Toyota Fortuner crashed into a divider on Delhi-Meerut Expressway (DME) near Dasna on Saturday night. The crash occurred while Dobhal was live on Instagram, with more than 80,000 people watching as he appeared distressed, spoke about feeling alone and overwhelmed, and referred to a "final drive".

In the livestream, Dobhal addressed his mother and said, "When I return in the next birth, please give me love." A Hindi song, "jisko jo bhi milta hai', could be heard playing in the background.

Moments before the impact, Dobhal turned the camera towards the windscreen and speedometer as the SUV accelerated. The Fortuner suddenly veered towards the median and struck the barrier with massive force.

Surendra Nath Tiwari, DCP (rural), said police received information about the incident around 10.20pm. "He was headed towards Delhi from the Meerut side when his SUV crashed near Hawa Hawai restaurant, hit the divider and jumped into the other lane. The car flipped several times," he added.

The crash was so severe that the vehicle was mangled and its wheels came off. "We suspect he was cruising at nearly 150-160kmph," the DCP added.

Police are trying to find out if Dobhal attempted suicide. "We suspect he deliberately turned the vehicle towards the divider to cause self-harm," Tiwari said. By the time police learnt of the crash, Dobhal's friends had already moved him to a hospital. "We received information on the emergency helpline 112 from his friends."

One of Dobhal's followers, Ashish Chaudhary of Mehrauli in Ghaziabad, was among the first to reach the spot. Chaudhary said he had been following Dobhal for long and was watching the livestream when the crash occurred. "As soon as I saw the crash live, I rushed to the spot with my friends. Some passersby were already trying to rescue him. We pulled him out of the mangled car and took him to Subharti Hospital in Meerut. That was the nearest," he said.

On Sunday morning, the YouTuber was referred to a private hospital in Delhi after his condition deteriorated.

Tiwari said a team had been formed to investigate the sequence of events and examine Dobhal's recent social media posts. Till late on Sunday evening, his family hadn't lodged any complaint. Police said they would question him once his condition was stable.

Dobhal, who grew up in Uttarakhand, built a massive following by blending travel, lifestyle and biking content. Known for his energetic on-camera style, he built a fan community, "Brosena". His YouTube channel has nearly 8 million subscribers and his Instagram account about 7.6 million followers.

He frequently featured his family in videos, including his wife Ritika Chauhan, mother Chandrakala, father Jagdamba and brother Atul, also known as Kamal Ink.

In the days leading up to the crash, Dobhal had posted content that alarmed his followers. On March 4, he uploaded a nearly two-hour YouTube vlog that he described as his "last video", saying it was recorded in "deep mental distress" and after "five days without food". He accused his parents, brother and his brother's girlfriend Shreya of ruining his life over his inter-caste marriage — Dobhal from a Brahmin family and Ritika with Rajput roots — and suggested he had been pushed towards "self-harm".

SLEEP FOR SEVEN HOURS AND 18 MINUTES DAILY TO WARD OFF DIABETES, HEART DISEASE RISK

New research says "weekend catch-up" could actually increase the risk of insulin resistance. If you want to avoid diabetes, try sleeping around seven and a half hours every night

WHY SLEEP

Sleep is important as the body uses the time to repair tissues, regulate metabolism & boost immunity

7 to 9 hours of sleep improves cognitive function, stabilises mood and reduces risks of chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease

THE MAGIC NUMBER

Previous research has proved sleep duration is linked to the risk of insulin resistance and diabetes. But there has been no clarity on the role of weekend catch-up sleep. Now, a study from Nantong University, China, published in 'BMJ Open Diabetes Research & Care' mapped estimated glucose disposal rate (eGDR; a surrogate for insulin resistance) in over 10,000 people in the 20-80 age group to show:

➤ Lower the eGDR, greater the risk of insulin resistance

➤ **The sweet spot is 7 hours and 18 minutes to ward off diabetes**

➤ More nightly sleep was associated with a lower eGDR, particularly among women and those in the 40-59 age group

➤ In some, more than 2 hours of weekend catch-up sleep was associated with a lower eGDR

INDIANS & SLEEP

Health tech company Resmed's sleep survey nterviewing 5,000 Indians ahead of World Sleep Day (March 13) found:

➤ Greater awareness about sleep, but quality sleep is still elusive for most

44% of Indians ranked sleep as one of the most important behaviours for a long, healthy life

53% get quality sleep on only four nights a week or less

3 in 4 Indians track their sleep using a wearable device at least occasionally

39% respondents dealt with stress after a poor night's sleep

Sri Lankan Tamil camp murder sparks protests, arson

Times News Network

Chennai: Tension gripped Gummidipoondi area of Tamil Nadu Sunday as protesters torched the house of suspects who allegedly killed a resident of Sri Lankan Tamil rehabilitation camp located near the town on Saturday night.

The deceased, Sivakumar, 42, was the chairman of the camp management committee of the Sri Lankan Tamil rehabilitation camp at Pethikuppam near Gummidipoondi, where more than 3,000 people reside.

A native of Sri Lanka, he lived in the camp with his wife, Devika, and their 3 children.

Police said Sivakumar had a running feud with Mahendran (50), also a Sri Lankan native, and his brother, Selva (48). The rivalry, stemming from family issues, reportedly intensified recently after 198 newly built houses were allotted to beneficiaries in the camp, with claims that Mahendran's son was not given a house because of Sivakumar.

According to police, a group led by Mahendran waylaid Sivakumar inside the camp and attacked him with iron rods and other weapons. He suffered severe injuries and collapsed on the spot. Relatives rushed him to the govt hospital in Gummidipoondi, where doctors declared him dead.

Following the murder, angry residents vandalised and set fire to the houses of Mahendran and Selva. Fire personnel later doused the flames, though household items were destroyed.

To prevent further unrest, more than 100 police personnel were deployed in and around the camp.

Six suspects, including Mahendran and Selva, have been detained.

On Sunday, Sivakumar's kin and residents blocked the Chennai-Kolkata National Highway for nearly one hour in protest against the murder.

A Kerala story: Muslim family hosts Hindu neighbour's homage at home

Times News Network

Kozhikode: In a poignant tale of communal harmony, a Muslim family in Perinthalmanna, Malappuram, insisted that their Hindu neighbour and tenant's mortal remains be kept at their home for public homage before the final rites on Thursday.

Pallath Hameed and Iyya Diya, an elder member of his family, took the initiative to host the homage of Ramesh Nambiar (67), who had lived in their house with his wife, Vinodini, for nearly three decades, Hameed's son Muhammed Nizam said. The two families had become inseparable over the years.

Ramesh had died of a heart attack on Wednesday evening. His body was laid in the living room of Hameed's home, with a lamp lit beside it. It was brought there around 12pm and kept for public homage for nearly two hours, Nizam said.

Both families had wished for the body to be kept at Hameed's home before cremation. "Ramesh himself had once said that if anything happened to him, his body should be kept at our house. He was also like a son to Iyya Diya. His relatives initially planned to take the body to a sibling's home, but considering the wishes of the deceased and our family, they agreed," Nizam said.

Ramesh was the son of P Govindan Nambiar, a leader of the undivided Communist Party who won from Perinthalmanna in the first general election in 1957. Govindan had sacrificed much of his wealth for the Communist movement. Ramesh was imprisoned for about a month in the Perinthalmanna sub-jail for protesting against the Emergency when he was a ninth-grade student at Perinthalmanna Govt High School. Vinodini is a CPM branch secretary.

Nizam said Ramesh, who had no children, had treated him like his own son. "He lived here for nearly three decades, and we were very close. I am 26 and have known him all my life. They used to look after us when we were children. We were like one family," he said.

TIMES BUSINESS

* THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2026

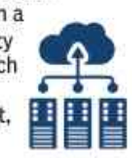
AI INFRA BOOM TO HELP MSMES

AI has the potential to transform MSMEs across the manufacturing value chain—from predictive maintenance, energy optimisation, and vision-based quality control on shopfloors, to AI-enabled credit assessment, customer engagement and compliance automation

AI could add **$135.6–$149.9 billion** to manufacturing MSMEs by 2035, assuming they account for **50%** of India's manufacturing value added

With AI projected to contribute **$1.7 trillion** to the economy by 2035 (Niti Aayog estimate), AI infrastructure investment could reach about **$500 billion**

Large spending on data centres and semiconductors could open a **$100–$150 billion** opportunity for MSMEs, supplying non-tech capital goods such as harnesses, cooling equipment, and industrial components



Source: PwC India and the Observer Research Foundation (ORF)

OpenAI hardware leader resigns after deal with Pentagon

Moscow: Caitlin Kalinowski, who oversaw hardware at OpenAI, announced her resignation on Saturday, citing concerns about the company's agreement with the Department of Defense. In a post on X, she wrote OpenAI did not take enough time before agreeing to deploy its AI models on the Pentagon's classified cloud networks. "AI has an important role in national security. But surveillance of Americans without judicial oversight and lethal autonomy without human authorization are lines that deserved more deliberation than they got," she posted. REUTERS

Raw material dearer, AC prices to rise 5-15%

New Delhi: As the mercury rises, leading airconditioner makers are increasing prices in the range of 5-15% to offset sustained increases in raw material costs and supply chain expenses. Leading players, including Daikin, Voltas, Blue Star, LG, Haier, and Mitsubishi have announced increases across models, passing on higher input costs for key raw materials such as copper, a weaker rupee, new energy-efficiency norms and an increase in freight costs. AGENCIES

Dumping of goods by ships at ports worries exporters

Say Biz Getting Hurt, To Flag Congestion With Govt Today

Dipak Dash & Sidhartha | TNN

New Delhi: Amid signs of easing of logistical blockade in the Persian Gulf, along with steps by govt to address their concerns, exporters are worried over goods being dumped by shipping lines at any port, hurting their business.

They are expected to flag the issue with govt on Monday, after the customs and shipping ministry simplified norms. Besides, there is fear that returning cargo may choke the ports, impacting flow of goods to the US and Europe, for which steps may be required.

"Govt's initiative to facilitate returned export cargo in the current environment is timely. However, it will be important to ensure that this does not lead to congestion at key gateway ports, such as Jawaharlal Nehru Port and Mundra Port, through which a large share of India's trade with West Asia is routed. Efficient handling will be critical to keeping export supply chains moving smoothly," said Fieo director general Ajay Sahai. On Sunday, customs issued orders to its field officers, listing the protocol to deal with returning ships in the wake of disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, which has caused an "exceptional situation" affecting major shipping routes. The circular deals with cargo that has been loaded on vessels, which are within Indian territorial waters as well as those are returning to India ports.

TACKLING DISRUPTION

- **DP World** decides to ship goods to Fujairah, Khor Fakkan and then move by road to Jabel Ali
- **Customs** simplifies rules for goods loaded on to ships to return to Indian ports
- **DGFT** eases export obligation requirements under advance authorisation and EPCG schemes
- **Shipping ministry** has asked ports to review charges in view of congestion

While offering relaxation for 15 days, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs said: "The field formations to ensure the recovery of all export incentives, including IGST, drawback etc manually, if the same is already disbursed. The transhipment of cargo shall be dealt as per existing provisions."

As reported by **TOI** on Saturday, the shipping ministry has also asked ports to lower charges for goods that are stuck. On Saturday, DGFT also provided concessions to exporters to meet their commitments under two schemes to help them deal with the challenges posed by the tension in West Asia.

"In view of the prevailing geo-political developments affecting international shipping routes and global supply chains, and with a view to facilitating exporters, the export obligation (EO) period/block wise EO period in respect of specified advance authorisations and EPCG authorisations expiring between March 1, 2026 and May 31, 2026 has been automatically extended up to Aug 31, 2026 without payment of composition fee," it said in a public notice on Saturday.

There are, however, signs of easing of flow of goods, even shipping lines, such as Maersk and MSC stay away due to the stress in the Strait.

On Sunday, DP World offered alternative routes for Persian Gulf-bound cargo as a "temporary arrangement to facilitate the handling of import containers". As part of the arrangement, containers will head to Khor Fakkan or Fujairah Port. "DP World, in coordination with shipping lines and the relevant authorities, will arrange for the containers to be moved under bonded road transit to Jebel Ali Port for final clearance," the logistics player, which controls 20-25% of Indian shipments, told its customers. Customs formalities will be completed at Jebel Ali.

"Some shipping lines have started taking containers with a 300% freight increase. Jebel Ali port is not accepting (cargo), but nearby ports Khor Fakkan, Fujairah are working, so limited containers are being discharged at wherever port is accepting. Movement is about 25-30% of normal and there movement is slow due to congestion at destination ports.

"Prices in all Gulf markets are also up by 300% due to low imports so it's still feasible if delivery is done," said Danish Shah of Pune-based Sanghar Exports.

TOI IN THE CLASSROOM

Building a Balanced Core and Satellite Mutual Fund Portfolio

As geopolitical tensions escalate, financial planners advise building a core and satellite portfolio to help MF investors optimise their long-term returns and meet their goals with lower volatility, which eases the anxiety of active schemes lagging the broad market

Invesco Mutual Fund

An investor education and awareness initiative

For Know Your Customer (KYC) guidelines along with the documentary requirements and procedure for change of address, phone number, bank details, etc., please visit the Education and Guidance section on www.invescomutualfund.com. Investor should deal with only SEBI registered Mutual Funds, details of which can be verified under "Intermediaries/Market Infrastructure Institutions" on https://www.sebi.gov.in/index.html. For any grievance / complaint, please call us on 1800-209-0007 or write to us at mfservices@invescoindia.com. Alternatively, complaints can be registered on the SEBI SCORES Portal at https://scores.sebi.gov.in

Mutual Fund investments are subject to market risks, read all scheme related documents carefully.

What Is A Core Portfolio In An Equity MF?

The core portfolio is built based on the investor's objectives—age, risk-taking capacity, and the time available to reach their goals. It consists of a mix of low-cost index funds and a mix of flexicap schemes and diversified largecap-oriented equity funds that aim to provide stability and help achieve long-term goals. Largecap stocks have proven track records and strong management teams with the ability to navigate difficult domestic or global situations.

What Is Satellite Portfolio In This Strategy?

The satellite portion consists of relatively aggressive bets such as small-cap funds, momentum funds, value funds, or narrow sectoral funds like defence, infrastructure, banking, IT, and pharma. These carry a higher risk but have the potential to generate higher alpha.

Benefits Of Having Core & Satellite Strategy

Such a strategy helps investors meet their long-term goals with lower volatility. In times of market stress and volatility, investors tend to be less worried about such a portfolio compared to a randomly-built aggressive portfolio. Such a portfolio is well diversified, has lower costs, and helps prevent the anxiety caused by sharp falls when investors pick a single thematic fund or when an active scheme lags the broad market, as well as the worry of trying to pick the single best fund.

How Much Should One Allocate To Each Part?

The core portfolio can remain stable and would not require high churn or frequent changes, while the satellite portion may require investors to time entries and exits to generate maximum returns. Based on an individual's risk profile and timeframe for investment, financial planners believe investors can allocate a large chunk—70–75%—to their core portfolio, and the balance 25–30% to the satellite portion. First-time mutual fund investors can also adopt this strategy. The core portion can provide a stable base through diversified funds, while the satellite portion can offer exposure to relatively higher-risk and higher-return segments. The allocation between the two strategies can be decided based on the investor's risk-taking capacity and investment horizon.

— PRASHANT MAHESH

Axis, Max Financial ink deal to list life cover JV

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Axis Bank has entered into an agreement with Max Financial Services to pursue a listing of their life insurance joint venture, Axis Max Life Insurance, by April 2027, potentially through a merger of Max Financial into the insurer. The agreement outlines a sequence of options to unlock value from the insurance business, with the first step being an attempt to list the company on stock exchanges without a traditional initial public offering.

If this route does not materialise, the arrangement provides several alternatives. Axis entities can swap part or all of their shares in the insurer for shares or other non-cash consideration based on a pre-agreed formula. If the listing still does not take place, Axis can require the company to pursue a conventional IPO. The agreement also provides exit mechanisms under which Axis can trigger a sale of its entire stake to Max Financial at fair value if agreed timelines are not met. If Max Financial is unable to buy the shares, it must find another buyer at the same valuation, failing which Axis can sell its stake to a third party or push for a fresh IPO of the insurer.

17-member committee set up for SEZ reforms

New Delhi: Govt has set up a 17-member committee to suggest larger reforms in the policy for special economic zones (SEZs), an official said.

It will submit a concept paper or roadmap or suggestions or amendments within six months along with its recommendations for broad-based and comprehensive reforms to formulate a SEZ 2.0 policy. It will undertake a background study focused on the harmonisation of various prevalent export promotion schemes, including SEZs, export-oriented units (EoUs), MOOWR (Manufacturing and Other Operations in Warehouse), Advance Authorisation, EPCG (export promotion for capital goods), and Duty Free Import Authorisation (DFIA). AGENCIES

Data breached at Cognizant unit TPS, 3.4m people exposed

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Cognizant subsidiary TriZetto Provider Solutions (TPS) has suffered a data breach that exposed the sensitive information of about 3.4 million individuals, according to a filing with the Office of the Maine Attorney General.

TPS said it has begun notifying affected individuals about the cybersecurity incident, which may have exposed certain protected health information. According to the company, suspicious activity was detected on October 2 last year within a web portal used by some of its healthcare provider clients to access TPS systems. The company said it launched an investigation immediately after identifying the activity, engaged external cybersecurity experts and informed law enforcement authorities.

The probe found that an unauthorized actor may have accessed certain records beginning in Nov 2024. The compromised records were linked to insurance eligibility verification transactions used by healthcare providers to determine insurance coverage for patient treatment.

TPS said the exposed data may include individuals' names, addresses, dates of birth, social security numbers, health insurance member numbers, provider names, health insurer names, primary insured details, and other demographic and health-related information.

The company said the breach did not involve payment card data, bank account details or other financial account information. It also noted that it is not aware of any cases of identity theft or fraud linked to the incident so far.

Responding to queries from TOI, Cognizant said, "In October 2025, TPS became aware of suspicious activity within a web portal used by some of TPS's US healthcare provider customers to access our systems. We engaged external cybersecurity experts, eliminated the threat and notified affected customers and patients, providing them with the necessary support and information."

Centre keeping close tabs to ensure steady supplies

Says Price Situation Comfortable Amid West Asia Conflict

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New Delhi: The price situation in the country remains comfortable and it is unlikely to see any significant surge against the backdrop of the West Asia conflict, top officials said, asserting that the Centre is keeping a close watch and working to ensure steady supplies.

Key ministries are tracking the situation daily and the Prime minister's office (PMO) is keeping a close tab and has mounted efforts at the "highest levels" with several countries to secure supplies ranging from energy to fertilisers, officials said. Review meetings are being held on a regular basis at the PMO to identify any stress points and take immediate remedial action.

The assessment is that the impact on inflation due to surge in global crude oil prices for now would be within the "tolerable limits" as pump prices for diesel and petrol have not been raised.

IDENTIFYING STRESS POINTS

- Review meetings are being held at **PMO on a regular basis**
- The objective is to identify any **stress points** and take **immediate remedial action**
- Impact on inflation due to surge in **global crude prices** for now would be within tolerable limits, says an assessment
- Centre has **charted plans to deal** with a possible long-drawn conflict

The price of Brent crude crossed the $92 a barrel mark on Friday and expectations are that it could soar higher, depending on the extent and duration of the conflict but measures announced by the US on Russian oil could help ease supplies to some extent.

A latest finance ministry report said that scenario building exercises on the macroeconomic impact of higher oil prices suggest that crude oil prices must remain above $100 per barrel for a sustained period for macroeconomic aggregates to reflect the strain.

Officials said the Centre has also taken note of comments that the conflict could be "long drawn" and has charted plans accordingly to deal with the situation. "Discussions are on at the highest levels for tapping alternate sources of supplies of gas and oil," said an official, stating that these supplies could arrive in 35-40 days.

Latest data shows that retail inflation was at 2.8% in Jan, the first print under the new data series which was released in Feb, with several new additions and weightage of food being reduced. The number is within the "comfort level" of RBI.

On the fertiliser stock situation, the official said that they remain "manageable" for the next sowing season, pointing out that urea stocks in March this year were higher than last March. "There are discussions to secure supplies and ensure that there is no strain," said the official.

Exports a worry but growth robust

The only worry for now is the country's exports, with shipments affected by the ongoing conflict. Officials said the commerce ministry is taking steps to ease the pain for exporters as well as chalking out alternate markets as part of the diversification plans.

What is giving comfort to policymakers is the robust growth, which officials said would be in the 7% plus region and asserted that the reform measures, which started with the GST rate cuts in late Sept last year, and the revised labour codes would be accelerated in the coming months to "shield growth" against the backdrop of geopolitical tensions and ongoing global uncertainty.

Railways proposes changes to pvt partnership policy

Will Take Responsibility For Land Acquisition, Ensure Certainty In Pvt Investment Recovery

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New Delhi: Railways has proposed two major amendments to its over a decade-old public private partnership (PPP) policy to bring greater certainty in recovery of private investment and reduce risk. The changes will include offering a 50-year concession period and railways taking the entire responsibility of land acquisition.

Officials said the revised policy is crucial, considering railways has identified 15 projects worth Rs 35,800 crore for PPP, including laying of new lines, doubling of tracks and redevelopment of stations by March 2028. At present, in most cases the concession period ranges between 20 to 35 years.

"We have forwarded some projects under PPP for final approval and more will be added to the list. The two critical changes will take care of all risks any project faces," said a railway official. At present, PPP projects in railways are executed under a 2012 policy and till Dec 2025, only 18 such projects of Rs 16,686 crore have been completed through the route. Seven projects of Rs 16,362 crore are under implementation, including coal connectivity and port connectivity projects.

AMENDMENTS TO REDUCE PROJECT RISK

PPP Pipeline of Infra Projects Till Mar 2028

Ministry	Projects	Total Cost (in ₹Cr)
Highways	116	8.3 lakh
Power	46	3.4 lakh
Ports, Shipping & Waterways	22	37,463
Railways	15	35,817
Water Resources	29	12,236
Petroleum & Natural Gas	1	8,473
DPIIT	2	6,646
Civil Aviation	11	2,262

Major Projects by Railway Ministry

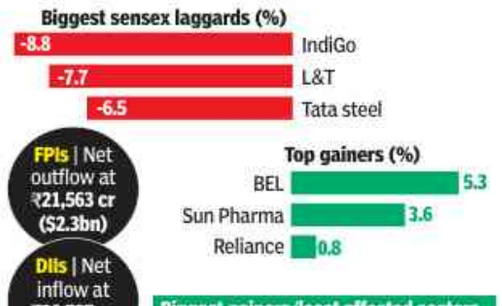
	Total Cost (in ₹Cr)
Gati Shakti Cargo Terminals (155)	11,311
Godda-Pakur/Nagarnabi (new line)	4,165
Manuguru-Ramagundam (new line)	4,014
Luburi-Tentuloi-Budhanpank (new line)	3,943
Jajpur-Keonjhar (new line)	2,987
Tambram Station Redevelopment	742
Tambram Station Redevelopment	420

Officials said under the current policy, the cost of land acquisition is borne by the private player or the special purpose vehicle (SPV) formed for a particular project, with railways acquiring land. One of them said, "In the proposed changes, railways will have the entire responsibility of land acquisition cost and the process for getting land." Land acquisition has often resulted in project delays and govt is learning from the experience of building highways.

Officials said a beginning has been made with railways minister Ashwini Vaishnaw recently announcing 50-year concession period for Gati Shakti Multi-Modal Cargo Terminals as a part of a broader policy.

WEST ASIA WAR: EQUITY INDICES LOGGED WORST WEEK IN OVER A YEAR, JITTERS MAY CONTINUE

Last week, sensex and Nifty put up their worst weekly show in 14 and 12 months, respectively. Both indices lost about 2.9% each as oil prices surged, and a fear of energy supply shock lurked amid escalating conflict between Iran and US-Israel. This week, markets are likely to stay on the edge with the war showing no signs of relenting. Investors will track how the conflict affects energy supplies, foreign fund flows and rupee's strength.



FPIs | Net outflow at ₹21,563 cr ($2.3bn)

DIIs | Net inflow at ₹32,787 cr ($3.6bn)

Total investor wealth lost was ₹13.8 lakh cr with BSE's market cap now at ₹449.7 lakh cr

Biggest sectoral laggards

Index	Close	% change
BSE PSU Bank	5,528	-6.7
BSE Realty	6,068	-4.9
BSE Oil & Gas	29,596	-4.8
BSE Insurance	1,786	-4.7
BSE Bankex	68,140	-4.6

Biggest gainers/least affected sectors

Index	Close	% change
BSE India Defence	6,741	3.4
BSE Capital Goods	70,454	0.2
BSE CPSE	4,042	-0.7
BSE Healthcare	43,917	-0.8
BSE TECK	15,630	-1.2

Source: BSE, NSDL, ETIG database

Aramco scrips surge 4%, most in three years

Saudi Aramco jumped the most since April 2023 on Sunday as the Iran war entered its second week, prompting supply disruptions that may send oil prices higher. Shares of the oil giant climbed as much as 4.9% in Riyadh before paring gains to close up 4.1%, on the first day of trading for the stock since Brent crude prices topped $90 a barrel on Friday. Brent, the global benchmark, may climb further after UAE and Kuwait started reducing oil production amid a near-closure of the vital Strait of Hormuz waterway, adding to interruptions affecting worldwide energy supply and exports. BLOOMBERG

Govt commences work to improve district domestic product estimation

Shiva.Rajora @timesofindia.com

New Delhi: India's official statistical machinery is set to better its estimation of district domestic products (DDP), with the availability of more granular data in the new GDP series, statistics secretary Saurabh Garg told **TOI.**

"We have given more focus on having more granular data in this series, so that state domestic products are captured much more effectively. We are also moving towards better estimations of district domestic products, which we hope to work with the state govt in the coming months," Garg said.

At present, DDP is estimated by relying on top-down allocation methods, proportionately distributing state GDP to districts based on demographic indicators like population. This results in 'near-identical' growth rates for districts, masking true inter-district disparities, the vast informal sector and local shocks to the economy.

Accurate DDP estimates can enable targeted policy interventions by identifying laggard districts and better assessment of regional inequality and employment trends. The responsibility for calculating DDP lies with the directorates of economics and statistics (DES) of the respective state govts, under the technical guidance of the National Statistical Office (NSO).

"We want to do this in conjunction with the states because that's where the real policy decisions are, and they have also shown great enthusiasm for this. We will continue to bring out national and state level GDP figures, but we are also working with the states to replace the top-down allocation-based approach with a bottom-up approach," Garg said.

CONTRAPUNTO

Idle rich are being replaced by the workaholic wealthy

– ROBERT FRANK, Richistan

Message In Blue

Sporting triumphs, like India's in T20, and heroic defeats, like Lakshya's in All England, tell us much about life

Team India, SKY leading from the front and coached by the almost never-smiling Gautam Gambhir, reserved their best for the last, to create cricket history on Sunday. In cricket, as in life, it's not how you start, but how you finish. No team had retained the T20 World Cup trophy before. No team had won it at home. India crossed both milestones. If there was ever a clinical display by any team in a major final, this was it. The top order (Sanju Samson, Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan) turned batting into a video game. The spinners, especially Axar Patel, bowled with precision, and to a plan. And Bumrah was again, just Bumrah. Simply, unplayable. He is God's gift to Indian cricket, probably the greatest Indian bowler of all-time.

This World Cup had started unceremoniously, with Bangladesh pulling out, and Pakistan creating acrimony. But as it progressed, sport took over. If social media offers any evidence, the matches were being widely enjoyed even in Pakistan. Sport has a way of telling the world that there are better ways of engaging with each other, than fighting unnecessary wars.

There was a time Brazilians considered coming second in world football a tragedy. National expectations were to always win – always. In white-ball cricket, public expectations in India have also reached such unrealistic levels. We must remember that winning and losing are cyclical, and inevitable, in sport. Not all defeats are disasters; some can be as inspiring as victories.

That's what the Lakshya Sen story in the All England championship tells us. Despite the loss in the final on Sunday, his lion-hearted showing will become part of badminton folklore. In the semifinals on Saturday, Sen hobbled through much of the third game. Despite cramps, he won a match that, staggeringly, stretched beyond an hour and half. Despite being drained, he was back in court in less than a day, against an opponent who wasn't wrung out, who had spent an hour less on court over the week. Despite all this, he matched the eventual winner, Lin Chun-Yi, of Chinese Taipei, stroke for stroke. When you are 110% heart, even 70% of physical fitness doesn't matter.

All England men's singles crown has eluded India for 25 years now. Only two men – Prakash Padukone (1980) and Pullela Gopichand (2001) – have won it. But Sen, who was playing his second final after 2021, gives hope that his *lakshya* of lifting the trophy is likely to be realised in future. His performance underlines another big message: it is always possible to be a better version of yourself.

Haves & Have-Yachts

The majority of the better-off keep gazing at the 1%. Our fascination has many layers

Whether or not the number makes sense – and it likely doesn't, given massive levels of financial illiteracy – it's sexxxxy. $692mn. Yes, over three years. Yes, there are performance targets. Yes, a lot of it is company stock. But but but…someone born in *sadda* Madurai and schooled in *sadda* Chennai, is now drawing this kind of salary. It's mindblowing. Pundits say Sundar Pichai deserves it, having led the massive rise in Google's market capitalisation and its AI pivot. Gemini says this compensation package is up to 180,000 times larger than the average annual salary in India. As the headline sinks in, emotions get complicated. Does admiration prevail, or indignation? It's different strokes for different folks.

But for sure, this 1% lot, the have-yachts, has the rest of us, the haves even more than the have-nots, all mesmerised.

Some still rage against 'filthy lucre'. Others, as Niall Ferguson points out, nowadays see the ascent of money as essential to the ascent of man. This means people can feel a complicated sense of identification with the ultra-wealthy. Maybe, watching the 1% is like keeping tabs on a version of a life, which they half-dream could have been theirs. Less envy. More something wistful, and harder to 100% explain. There's also something anthropological, about watching someone who makes more consequential decisions before breakfast, than others make their whole life. It's frontier gazing, of a kind.

In earlier centuries, ordinary people related to extreme wealth via distance and deference. Today, there is an illusion of proximity. A billionaire with a social media account feels subject to pile-ons, like anyone else. Elon Musk is a strong expression of this. There is his huge wealth. Then, there is the huge volume of public psychological energy he absorbs and generates. Btw Tesla shareholders have approved what could be a $1tn pay package for him. Smoke that, Pichai.

Primetime Loves Bombs

These are fab seasoning for tall stories and fake news

Anil Abraham

Uncles in the park were more excited than the anchors on primetime TV, impossible as it seems. Because their humdrum, banal, retired lives had been infused with renewed energy. Thanks, admittedly, to the War Games on TV. Now, the exploits of middle-aged molesters (Epstein Files) had been overshadowed in park goss, by those of trigger-happy, tin-pot quasi-dictators.

Gossiping G was reciting tall stories about Burj Khalifa being bombed to rubble. Controversial K claimed that the non-existent American embassy in Tehran had a hostage situation. Sensational S was wearing army camouflage, playing air sirens, and emitting the sound of bombs, as startled pigeons flew from their perch. One self-proclaimed 'war veteran', who had never stepped outside the dusty corridors of his govt office, was recounting, in lurid detail, the horrors of nuclear World War III that, per him, had already begun.

These sound effects and noise resembled a boomer's clumsy video game.

And these had excitedly spilled over from the television set, onto the forwarded messages of unemployed uncles. I carried the choicest bits of salacious speculation back home, and shared the panic with Kamala. She was not impressed. "Anupamaa is giving us more believable drama, with her exaggerated *maaroongi* dialogues, than these anchors describing death and destruction at our doorstep."

During the recent Indo-Pak conflict on TV, there were Mahabharat-type visuals of Karachi port being annihilated. These had the same CGI and special effects that accompanied Abhimanyu, when he was trapped in the chakravyuh. It really has become difficult to figure out what's real and what's fake. Because we live in an era of borrowed visuals. And of over-enthusiastic anchors taking us on different trips, to enhance their TRPs. It is only a matter of time, before some market-savvy commerce chain announces an End of the World sale, with massive discounts on bomb shelters and magic pills, promising to protect you from nuclear radiation.

Meanwhile, I glanced at my phone and noticed a message from Panic Parashuraman. He was fuelling rumors that there would be a petrol shortage, and suggesting that we should fill up our tanks immediately. Hiram Johnson famously said that the first casualty of war is truth. Somehow, hyperbole and exaggeration always seem more exciting than mere facts. Kamala gave me a piece of her mind about war theatrics, as I was picking up my phone, to forward fear and fake news. War Games can easily distract us from Hunger Games.

God, Lefties, Tucker & Trump

US politics around war? Complicated. Evangelicals who believe world is ending, and centrist Democrats, like it. Progressives who distrust Netanyahu, and moderate Republicans, hate it. MAGA is split, also around Israel. Trump's not getting a war bump

Dan Cassino

Professor of Govt & Politics

Trump has broken a lot of precedents in US politics. As bombs keep falling, in what looks like an extended campaign against Iran, and the first American soldiers die in counterattacks, he is breaking another precedent. He's started a war without getting any bump in support, at home.

Historically, when US goes to war, its president's approval jumps dramatically. Think of George W Bush, after 9/11, or his father, after the first Gulf War, both with approval ratings above 90%. Opposition gets behind the president. The public follows suit. But not this time. Trump's approval ratings have continued their slow, steady decline.

This time, the war has also brought out deep intra-party divides, among both Republicans and Democrats. These divides, largely driven by views of Israel, aren't new. But Trump has given them new relevance.

Within MAGA base, this divide is between those who maintain loyalty to Trump, and those who feel that he has betrayed campaign promises. Those who feel betrayed, say that this war isn't putting "America First". They remember how Trump used to lament billions spent on wars in West Asia. He used to say: he would negotiate great deals, which would make such wars unnecessary.

What's Trump's defence today? That he is the one who decides what MAGA stands for. And what he's telling them, is that this war is different from past conflicts, even if he doesn't explain how.

Of course, other elements in MAGA base are cheering Trump on. Among this lot, the strongest support for war is coming from evangelical Christians. Despite Trump's nebulous religious views, these Christian groups have supported him, strongly and consistently. This was largely because he was making the right enemies. By pushing against abortion rights, feminism, and gay rights. The evangelical support was decisive, both in 2016 and 2024.

But elements of the evangelical movement are now supporting Trump for other, even more troubling reasons. Based on their reading of the Biblical Book of Revelation, evangelicals believe that Jesus will return to Earth, to end the world. But only after a major war in West Asia. This will also, they believe, involve the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, which was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE.

For these evangelicals, the current Iran war is a welcome step, towards a desired end. The fact that the loudest cheerleaders of this war are hoping that the world will end, should alarm anyone who doesn't share their beliefs.

Oddly, some of the same elements show up in anti-war conspiracy theories. For instance, the one being peddled by Tucker Carlson, and other conservatives. According to these views, which contain strong elements of antisemitism, Jewish leaders manipulated Trump into war. Why? To get cover, to destroy Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem, in order to rebuild the Temple. Such arguments have proven popular among young Republicans, many of whom have embraced increasingly antisemitic views.

Image: AI

Meanwhile, Trump has been trying to hold his coalition together. He says that his past statements against past wars in West Asia don't apply right now. Because what's happening right now isn't technically a war. Also, because he's not starting a war, but ending an ongoing one.

Still, the Republican base is shakier on Iran, than on other elements of Trump's foreign policy. Of course, the real threat isn't that his die-hard supporters will turn against him. It is that moderate Republicans, who have never really liked him, but were happy to back a winner, will decide that he isn't one.

In addition, there are a lot of Republican candidates who, even before the Iran war, were already worried about upcoming midterm elections. Democrats were already expected to win big. Some of this lot may be willing to dump Trump, if they think doing so will help them hold on to their seats.

But there are equally deep divides within Democrats. Younger Democrats, and those in the progressive wing of the party, are more likely to sympathise with Palestinians, than with Israeli govt. They are deeply suspicious of Netanyahu. And also of any elected US official who would give Israeli PM money and weapons, to carry out what they see as a genocide in Gaza, and West Bank.

Older, more middle-of-the-road Democrats might be unhappy with Netanyahu's policies. But they aren't willing to abandon unconditional support for Israel, which has been mainstream in US politics for decades.

This has created a dangerous situation for elected Democrats. Their base increasingly wants them to take a stand against the war, and against Netanyahu. But they fear that doing so will open them up to accusations of antisemitism. Some Republicans have equated any criticism of Israel with hatred of Jews.

In 2024, this split was one of the drivers behind Kamala Harris's loss in the presidential election. Many progressives and young Democrats stayed home at that time, upset with her support for Israel. Also looming as a danger for Democrats, is the well-funded pro-Israel lobby. It has pledged to spend tens of millions of dollars this year, on attacking candidates who don't support continued, unconditional aid for Israel.

These deep fissures in both the parties mean that political consequences of war are going to depend on the consequences felt at home. If Trump can manage to achieve some kind of victory, without too many US casualties, without a big spike in gasoline prices, and without this looking like another Iraq or Afghanistan, he'll manage to get out without too much damage to his administration.

As a lame duck with approval ratings in the 30s, Trump was already battling political irrelevance. And he's now staked his presidency on these strikes against Iran.

Last thing: If anything goes seriously wrong in the war, divides within Democrats and Republicans will go away. Everyone will decide that they were always against the war.

The writer teaches at Fairleigh Dickinson University, US

Hashtags To House Seats? Easy. Changing Nepal? Tough

Angry Nepali voters have put a rapper & a TV anchor in charge. Their first priority should be creating jobs, that's what Gen Z wants most

Nishchal N Pandey

Columnist based in Kathmandu

If the mass student protests of Sept 8 and 9 last year rattled Nepal's political establishment, the election verdict has shaken it even more profoundly.

What began as youthful anger on the streets, has now translated into a sweeping electoral message: Nepalis are weary of instability, exhausted by hung parliaments, and impatient with the endless wrangling of an ageing political class. The ballot box has spoken with unusual clarity, signalling a generational shift in Nepal's politics.

Public frustration ran deep during the campaign. Corruption and poor governance dominated conversations as much as unemployment, crumbling infra, widening inequality, and the broken promises of leaders, who seemed increasingly detached from ordinary struggles.

Many voters believed that the ruling elite, and its inner circle, were more invested in clinging to power and accumulating personal wealth, than in rescuing the country from its economic malaise.

Against this backdrop, two unconventional figures captured the public imagination: Balen Shah, a hip-hop artiste, who rose to prominence as mayor of Kathmandu, and Rabi Lamichhane, a popular TV anchor, who founded Rastriya Swatantra Party only a few years ago. Together, they have ridden a wave of disillusionment with traditional politics, and appear poised to command a comfortable majority in parliament.

The scale of the upset has confounded many analysts. Nepal's mixed electoral system was long believed to prevent any single party from dominating the legislature. Yet this election unfolded like a political landslide. In one of its most dramatic moments, Balen Shah defeated former prime minister KP Oli in his home constituency of Jhapa, winning by nearly 50k votes – a stunning humiliation for the veteran leader and his Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist).

Oli was hardly the only casualty. The president of Nepali Congress also fell to the insurgent momentum of RSP, while many senior figures of Nepal's traditional parties suffered heavy defeats.

Fuelled by strong backing from Nepali diaspora, and a savvy social-media campaign run by Gen Z activists, RSP managed to dismantle a three-party political cartel. The cartel had dominated the country's political life for nearly three decades.

What is most striking is that the shift was not confined to urban centres. It spread into rural regions, once considered impregnable bastions of left-wing parties.

The election thus marks a decisive end to the dominance of leftist politics in Nepal – a system that often relied on nationalist rhetoric to mask administrative failures at home. Though Pushpa Kamal Dahal, chairman of Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre), managed to retain his seat in Rukum, his party is expected to secure barely a dozen seats, reducing once-formidable Maoists to a minor parliamentary presence. RSP's youthful MPs will almost certainly seize every opportunity to hold them accountable, for past governance failures.

Issues that animated voters were clear. Calls for effective governance, restoration of public trust, curbing organised violence, strengthening judicial independence, and enacting robust anti-corruption laws resonated widely. Voters appeared eager to place their faith in younger leaders, who promised transparency, accountability, and genuine reform.

Still, the real test begins now. New lawmakers must move swiftly to address expectations – amending the constitution, appointing qualified professionals to constitutional bodies, ensuring justice for victims of Sept student protests. Above all, they must tackle the country's most urgent challenge: jobs.

Economic recovery will not be easy. The 2015 Nepal earthquake, Covid, and last year's unrest severely dented investor confidence. Tourism, once a lifeline, remains weak, with barely 1.1mn visitors in 2025, despite Nepal's iconic attractions such as Mount Everest and Lumbini. Meanwhile, instability in West Asia threatens remittances – a crucial economic contribution, which accounts for nearly 28% of Nepal's GDP.

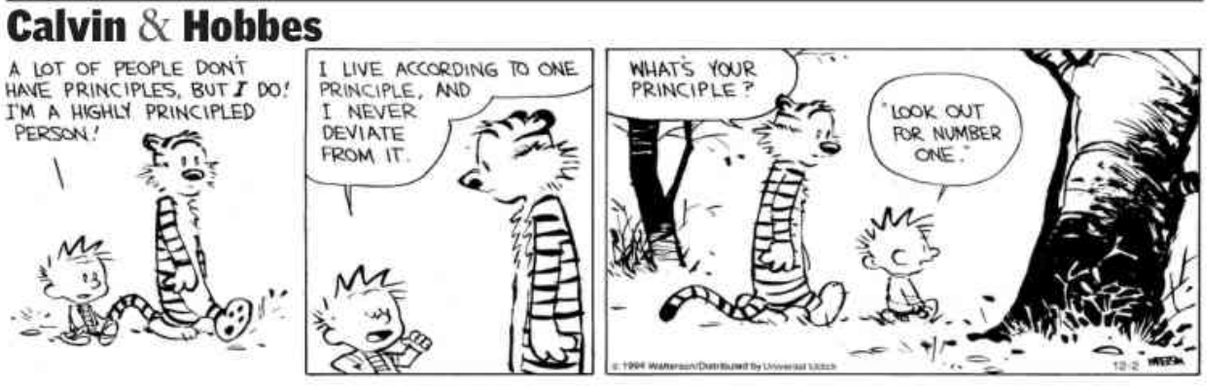
Still, people are optimistic. Nepal stands at the threshold of a historic transition, replacing an entrenched political order with a younger generation of leaders.

For India, this moment offers an opportunity as well. By embracing Nepal's political evolution and engaging the new leadership constructively, New Delhi can help shed lingering mistrust in bilateral relations, and address sensitive issues that have, too often, been exploited for political gain.

The message from Nepali voters is unmistakable: the old era is ending. Whether this new chapter becomes a story of renewal or another cycle of disappointment, will depend on whether the country's new leaders can transform popular hope into tangible progress.

The writer is director, Centre for South Asian Studies

Calvin & Hobbes


A LOT OF PEOPLE DON'T HAVE PRINCIPLES, BUT I DO! I'M A HIGHLY PRINCIPLED PERSON!
I LIVE ACCORDING TO ONE PRINCIPLE, AND I NEVER DEVIATE FROM IT.
WHAT'S YOUR PRINCIPLE?
"LOOK OUT FOR NUMBER ONE."

Sacredspace

Women will work out their own destinies – much better, too, than men can ever do for them. All the mischief to women has come because men undertook to shape the destiny of women.

Swami Vivekananda

Shakti Is Not Merely A Force; She Is Integration

Dada JP Vaswani

Many of us mistakenly equate shakti with power or force. And power is always associated with masculine energy. But the Hindu way of thinking is different. In Sanatan Dharm, shakti is essentially the feminine principle, goddess or Devi.

It is not without reason that every major deity in the Hindu pantheon has His own consort or Shakti. She represents his 'better', kinder, more compassionate half. Shakti worshippers believe that without Her, He has no power. It is Shakti who uses Her intuitive feminine powers to bring balance to the world. Shakti is also a divine force that helps in destroying demonic forces. Shakti complements the masculine and provides a sense of balance. Indeed, she is inherent power in all things, primordial manifest being, cosmic principle of life.

The divine image of Shiv as Ardhanarishwar represents divinity as half male and half female. This image symbolises affinity and unity between two principles, which may appear opposed, but are nevertheless indivisible and function in harmony in each act of creation. They are two aspects of the same being, both to be adored and venerated as much as the other. It is not without significance that every woman in India is seen as a manifestation of this divine principle, Shakti. It is not merely a force; Shakti is integration, in the truest sense of the term. Today, disintegration is setting in.

THE SPEAKING TREE

A woman, who is the centre of social integration, can stem the tide that threatens to destabilise our society. To reassert Gurudev Sadhu Vaswani's claim: "The woman-soul has the shakti to rebuild a shattered world on the strength of her intuitions, her purity, simplicity, spiritual aspirations, sympathy and silent sacrifice. The woman-soul will lead us!"

Consider Sita, the delicate princess who followed her beloved Ram into vanvas with a smile on her lips; Sita, who defied the mighty Ravan even in captivity. Consider Maitreyi, who rejected her husband's offer of material wealth and comfort and insisted instead that he should share his wealth of wisdom and spiritual knowledge with her. Consider Mira, who rejected social conventions and gave up the life of a queen to seek Krishn. Indian scriptures, epics and history stand testimony to the greatness of a woman-soul.

Given this background, it is sad that what we are witnessing today is a detrimental movement away from this concept of the sacred feminine. I read an ancient Greek story about a city that was threatened by a mythical monster called the Unicorn. Warriors and other brave men of the city could not stand up to the monster and fled in disarray. But a pure, simple, virtuous young maiden confronted the monster – who had to flee from the Shakti that she represented.

Our world today is threatened by nameless, faceless monsters that are compounded of hatred, violence, intolerance, insensitivity, ruthlessness and avarice. It is only a woman, pure, gentle, virtuous, strong in the spirit of simplicity, service and sacrifice, who can take on the monster and overcome him with her spiritual Shakti.

TIMES GLOBAL

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2026

IF EVERYONE FOUGHT FOR THEIR OWN CONVICTIONS THERE WOULD BE NO WAR
— LEO TOLSTOY

HARRY STYLES CRASHES RYAN GOSLING'S 'SNL' OPENING MONOLOGUE, SAYS HE WILL HOST THE SHOW NEXT WEEK

BEN STILLER TELLS WHITE HOUSE TO REMOVE 'TROPIC THUNDER' CLIP FROM PRO-WAR VIDEO: 'WE NEVER GAVE YOU PERMISSION'

War May Only End With Iran's Military, Rulers Wiped Out: US

Trump Warns Next Supreme Leader Would Not Last Sans His Approval

US President Donald Trump said his war with Iran may only end with its military and rulers wiped out, as Tehran moved on Sunday towards picking a new supreme leader while missiles and drones flew across West Asia. Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One he was not interested in negotiating an end to the conflict. "At some point, I don't think there will be anybody left maybe to say, 'We surrender,'" Trump said.

Trump also warned that Iran's next supreme leader would not last long without his approval. Nine days after US-Israeli strikes on his compound killed Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's Assembly of Experts met privately and chose their next leader, members of the body said. The clerics did not say who had been selected, only that a name would be announced soon. Some suggested Khamenei's 56-year old son Mojtaba Khamenei would succeed his father. Trump had previously demanded a say in the appointment and dismissed the younger Khamenei as an unacceptable "lightweight". "He's going to have to get approval from us," Trump told ABC News on Sunday, referring to Iran's next leader. "If he doesn't get approval from us he's not going to last long."

But Tehran's top diplomat said earlier in the day that the decision was Iran's alone, adding it would "allow nobody to interfere in our domestic affairs". Israel's military has warned any successor that "we will not hesitate to target you".

Separately, govts of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE and Bahrain reported Iranian drone attacks in their countries on Saturday and early Sunday.

AFP

A video grab shows fire erupting from an oil depot in Tehran on Sunday

NYT

Plumes of smoke rises from an oil storage facility in Tehran on Sunday

Iran Will Not Surrender: Prez

In a speech addressed to the Iranian people, Masoud Pezeshkian, the Iranian president, reiterated that his country would not surrender and would "not allow even one inch of the country's territory to be taken," according to IRIB, Iran's state broadcaster. "Iran and our nation have not bowed—and will not bow easily—before bullying, oppression, or aggression," he said. Pezeshkian's comments follow his apology on Saturday to Persian Gulf states that had been hit by Iranian missiles last week, before he issued another statement following criticism from Iranian hard-liners asserting that Iran had not attacked "friendly and neighbouring countries."

Israel Hits Iran Oil Facilities

The Israeli military struck several Iranian fuel sites late Saturday, sending huge balls of fire and smoke into the air and rocking Tehran and the neighbouring city of Karaj with explosions. The attacks, seen in videos circulating on social media and verified by NYT, appeared to be the first on Iran's energy infrastructure since the US and Israel launched strikes on Iran last weekend.

Iran's ministry of oil said in a statement that multiple oil storage depots in the provinces of Tehran and Alborz had been targeted. The Israeli military confirmed in a statement that it had attacked several fuel storage and energy complexes in Tehran, saying the facilities were being used by Iran's armed forces. Israel's military called it a "significant strike" aimed at dismantling the military infrastructure of the govt.

Tehran's main oil refinery is next to one of the storage facilities, in the city's southern Shahr Rey district, that was attacked, according to state media. Videos circulating on social media showed huge columns of fire lighting up the sky, and rising from what appeared to be the area of the oil depot.

The explosions Saturday night rattled residents of Tehran and came after an attack by Israel early Saturday on Mehrabad Airport, the nation's busiest domestic travel hub. Israel said it had hit airplanes parked on the runway used by Iran to send money and weapons to its proxy militant groups in the region. The sounds of the explosions at both the airport and the fuel depot shook homes miles away, residents said.

The Shahran oil depot in northwestern Tehran, which Israel targeted in June, was hit again, sending a dark plume of smoke swirling into the sky. Iran's oil ministry said that one of its depots in Karaj, just west of Tehran, was also struck. The ministry's statement said fire and emergency crews were working to put out the flames from the strikes, and asserted there would be no fuel or energy shortages because the ministry had taken precautions, anticipating strikes on its facilities.

Poisonous Fumes In Tehran

The view of Tehran's skyline overnight on Sunday was apocalyptic: Billowing smoke and towering oil fires turned the horizon orange as Israeli strikes ignited fuel depots outside the Iranian capital.

By Sunday morning, dark, oily smoke hung over Tehran, and the Iranian authorities said the strikes had released poisonous fumes into the air. The streets were largely empty and govt offices were mostly closed, two residents of the city said.

"The night turned into morning and the morning into night," said Aryan, 33, who asked to use his first name only.

"With the fire, it felt like night became day, and then with all the smoke the day turned back into night again." Black rain was falling, covering the city, he added. AGENCIES

Israel targets Iranian commanders in Lebanon; toll 400, including 83 kids

Beirut: Israel's military said it struck Iranian commanders in the Lebanese capital early on Sunday, expanding the scope of strikes to the heart of Beirut after days of strikes that have left nearly 400 people dead. The drone strike was the first within the city limits of Beirut since Israel-Hezbollah hostilities resumed last week, and came amid heavy bombardment on Beirut's southern suburbs.

Israel said it targeted key commanders of Iran's elite Quds Force of the Revolutionary Guards but did not name them. "The commanders of the Quds Force's Lebanon Corps operated to advance terror attacks against the state of Israel and its civilians, while operating simultaneously for the IRGC in Iran," the Israeli military said in a statement.

Deadliest strikes in eastern Lebanon, killing 41

Some of the deadliest bombardment took place in the last two days in eastern Lebanon, when 41 people were killed during a rare Israeli airborne raid deep into Lebanese territory. The Raouche neighbourhood on Beirut's seafront is typically a tourist attraction, but in recent days has hosted people displaced by strikes, some of whom stayed at the Ramada hotel which was hit.

AP

Israel strikes Sir al-Gharbiyeh village south Lebanon on Sunday

'Strike targeted senior Quds Force members'

An Israeli military source said the strike targeted five senior Quds Force members, including intelligence and finance personnel. Lebanon says four people were killed in the strike, part of a rapidly rising death toll that has reached 394 people, the health ministry said on Sunday, including at least 83 kids and 42 women. Israel's military has so far killed about 200 Hezbollah militants, spokesman Nadav Shoshani said.

'Iranian diplomats evacuated from Beirut on Russian plane'

More than 100 Iranians, including some diplomats, were evacuated from Beirut overnight on a Russian plane, a Lebanese official said on Sunday. "A total of 117 Iranians were evacuated on a Russian plane on Saturday," the official said on condition of anonymity. The evacuation comes after Lebanon's govt on Thursday banned any activity by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps — a main backer of Hezbollah.

2 Israeli soldiers killed

The Israeli military announced that two soldiers were killed in fighting in southern Lebanon on Sunday. They are the first military fatalities since the start of the war. AGENCIES

Indian among 2 killed in Saudi as projectile falls in residential area

Dubai: An Indian national is among two killed after a projectile fell on a residential location in Saudi Arabia on Sunday, officials said.

The military projectile fell in a residential area in Saudi Arabia's al-Kharj Governorate on Sunday, killing two people and injuring 12 others, the Saudi Civil Defence said. A Civil Defence spokesman said the projectile struck a residential compound belonging to a maintenance and cleaning company in Al-Kharj.

The incident killed one Indian national and one Bangladeshi national, while 12 Bangladeshi residents were injured, Al-Arabiya news reported. However, the authorities have not yet released the identity of the victims. Al Kharj governorate is home to a massive air base and has been targeted repeatedly over the past week as Tehran struck the Gulf after Israel and the US launched a campaign against Iran. PTI

IRAN'S REVOLUTIONARY GUARDS: THE SPINE OF A MILITARISED STATE

Within hours of the first airstrikes last weekend, militiamen from the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) were deployed in most of Iran's urban centres. With their pervasive military, political and economic clout, the Guards are often considered the main impediment to regime change in Iran. President Trump has suggested that the Guards drop their weapons. Analysts consider that scenario highly unlikely

NYT

A file photo of Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps members in Tehran

WHAT IS THE IRGC?

During the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, did not trust the armed forces. He organised a parallel armed force, the IRGC, to safeguard the revolution. The core of the group comprised members of neighbourhood committees that had been established to protect their areas. The eight-year war moulded the Guards into a more cohesive force. The Guards took on tasks like building roads, dams, other infrastructure, and even a missile development programme. Today, the Guards control at least 25% of Iran's economy, said Behnam Ben Taleblu, a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defence of Democracies. The Guards has expanded across West Asia, using its Quds Force, which is responsible for foreign operations, to build an axis of mostly Shia Muslim militias in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Gaza

HOW ARE THE GUARDS STRUCTURED?

The IRGC has 31 commands and the Guards number between 125,000 and 180,000 men. Not all Guards are armed; some work in fields like construction or cultural programmes. There are four main military branches — ground, naval and aerospace forces along with the Quds Force. In addition, the Guards control their own intelligence agency, as well as the Basij neighbourhood militias. The Guards follow a decentralised command structure to ensure that the Guards maintain domestic control in case the provinces were ever cut off from Tehran, or could overcome any vacuum in the absence of the supreme leader

WHO COMMANDS THE GUARDS?

Israeli and American attacks have killed two Guards commanders, one in June and the second on Feb 28. A veteran hard-line officer **Brig Gen Ahmad Vahidi**, was appointed on March 1 to head the Guards. A former minister of the interior and defence, he is amongst the founding commanders of the Quds Force in 1988, leading it for eight years

LOOKING AHEAD

Getty Images

Members of Iranian Basij paramilitary force march in a parade last year. IRGC holds control over Basij militia

Mojtaba Khamenei, son of the late supreme leader Ali Khamenei and his likely heir, enlisted with the Guards during the Iraq war and has maintained strong ties. As his father's closest aide, he appointed its senior officers for the past two decades, and is now considered their favourite, analysts said. While some members helped to mow down protesters in Jan, it is also a conscript force, so its soldiers mirror Iranian society — some disdain the Islamic system. A core group of 2,000 to 3,000 officers, however, are considered hard-liners whose rank and wealth are tied to the organisation. They will fight to the bitter end, analysts said

Source: NYT

US embassies in Baghdad and Oslo attacked, no casualty reported

Amid the widening war in West Asia, the US embassies in Baghdad and Oslo were targeted over the weekend. There were no casualties.

Embassy in Iraq's capital came under attack Saturday night. The source of the attack wasn't immediately known. Two rockets were intercepted, one landed on the edge of the embassy grounds and another landed inside the grounds, according to an Iraqi security official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military issues.

Iraq, which has close ties to both Iran and the US, finds itself once again caught between two allies. The Trump administration has stepped up pressure on Iraq's leaders in recent months to distance themselves from Iran politically and to rein in Iraqi militias linked to Iran. PM Mohammed Shia al-Sudani of Iraq ordered military and security commanders to pursue the perpetrators, adding that "targeting diplomatic missions and embassies operating in Iraq is an act that cannot be justified or accepted under any circumstances." He added that such attacks affect the stability of the entire country.

In Norway, the police said they were investigating an explosion that damaged the US Embassy in Oslo in the early hours of Sunday in what officials called a "targeted attack". "There is significant damage to the entrance area," inspector Frode Larsen, the head of the Oslo police department's investigation unit, said Sunday. While the police had no information about the cause of the explosion, Larsen said that it would be "natural" to assume that it was linked to the attacks on Iran by the US. AGENCIES

Vital desalination plants in Iran, Bahrain attacked

Water desalination plants have come under attack in Iran and on the Persian Gulf island of Bahrain over the weekend, threatening a resource vital to life in the harsh desert climates of the region.

On Saturday, Iran's foreign minister, Seyed Abbas Araghchi, accused the US of attacking a desalination plant on Qeshm Island, affecting the water supply for 30 villages. "The US set this precedent, not Iran," he said on social media, calling the attack "a dangerous move with grave consequences."

Capt Tim Hawkins, a spokesman for the US Central Command, said that US forces were not responsible for that attack. A day later, Bahrain's interior ministry said that an Iranian drone had "caused material damage" to a desalination plant, accusing Iran of "indiscriminately" attacking civilian targets. The country's water and electricity authority said there had been "no impact on water supplies or water network capacity." It was not clear whether either plant was still functioning. And there was no immediate comment from Iran on Bahrain's allegation.

NYT

Damaged oil trucks in an oil storage facility after overnight strikes by US & Israeli forces in Tehran on Sunday

Iran has faced severe water shortages in recent years, and Gulf countries like Bahrain depend heavily on desalination technology — which turns seawater into drinking water — to sustain tens of millions of people.

"Targeting a desalination plant in Bahrain crosses an important threshold and represents a serious escalation," said Abdullah Baabood, an Omani academic at Waseda University in Japan. "In the Gulf, desalination facilities are not merely infrastructure," he added. "They are essential lifelines that supply drinking water to millions."

In another development, Kuwait's national oil company announced a "precautionary" cut to its crude production. Fuel tanks at Kuwait's airport were targeted in a drone attack but no injuries were reported, its military said. The Kuwaiti interior ministry said two border guards "were martyred... while performing national duty", without elaborating. AGENCIES

Do not need UK help to win Iran war: US prez; Starmer dials Trump

London: President Donald Trump said on Saturday Britain was giving "serious thought" to sending two aircraft carriers to West Asia, but added that the US does not need them to win the war with Iran, in the latest clash between the military allies.

Trump has repeatedly criticised British PM Keir Starmer suggesting this week that he helped "ruin" the countries' historically close relationship after London blocked initial US use of British bases to attack Iran. In a post on Truth Social, Trump said he "will remember" the lack of British support during the conflict with Iran.

"The United Kingdom, our once Great Ally, maybe the Greatest of them all, is finally giving serious thought to sending two aircraft carriers to the Middle East (West Asia)," Trump said. "That's OK, Prime Minister Starmer, we don't need them any longer — But we will remember. We don't need people that join Wars after we've already won!"

The social media post comes after Britain's defence ministry said on Saturday it was preparing the Prince of Wales aircraft carrier for possible deployment. But no final decision has been taken about whether to send it to West Asia, a British official said.

Reuters/File photo

President Trump has repeatedly criticised UK PM Keir Starmer after London blocked initial US use of British bases to attack Iran

Starmer has defended his decision not to allow US forces to use British bases to support initial strikes on Iran, saying he needed to be satisfied that any military action was legal and well planned. He later granted US forces permission to use British bases for what he called defensive strikes against Iranian missiles.

Starmer spoke with Trump Sunday. "The leaders discussed the latest situation in the Middle East (West Asia) and the military cooperation between the UK and US through the use of Royal Air Force bases in support of the collective self-defence of partners in the region," a spokeswoman from Starmer's office said. REUTERS

Sailor of sunken Iranian warship told his dad of US warnings: Report

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A sailor of the Iranian warship IRIS Dena, which was sunk by a US submarine in Indian Ocean on March 4, had called his father over phone minutes before the frigate was struck, according to a report by Iran International, a Persian-language news network. The report claimed that he told his dad that American forces had twice ordered the crew to abandon the warship.

Despite the twin US warnings, IRIS Dena's commander refused to allow the crew to abandon the ship, the report said, quoting a source close to the family of the sailor. The sailor's father said some crew members had argued with the commander, and the 32 sailors who survived the attack were basically those who managed to escape on lifeboats after the warning, according to the source.

In a related development, Sri Lanka said it will grant free one-month visas to the sailors rescued from Iranian vessels, allowing them to remain in Sri Lanka, minister of public security Ananda Wijepala said on Sunday.

With PTI inputs

Iran's next supreme leader to face challenge from fraying loyalists

Dubai: Iran's next leader faces a massive external assault and growing internal anger, and while previous leaders relied on a hardcore of diehard ideologues in the population, it is far from clear how far his successor can do the same. Yet whether loyalists remain as numerous or as committed as in earlier decades is increasingly uncertain.

"The strategy in choosing a hardliner as the new leader would be to consolidate the base, but they're ending up with an increasingly small circle of supporters," said Ali Ansari, a modern history professor at the University of St Andrews in the UK. "And the longer this goes on, the more it will all fray at the edges," he said.

The Islamic Republic emerged from a 1979 revolution backed by millions of Iranians. But decades of rule marked by corruption, repression and mismanagement have thinned that support, alienating many ordinary people. Still, a core of loyalists remains — people who repeatedly show up at the ballot box to back the Islamic system and who turn out on the streets to crush protests.

Highly organised and able to mobilise quickly, they still pose a major obstacle to effecting regime change."

In the last presidential election, the most hardline candidate, Saeed Jalili, won around 9 million votes in the first round and 13 million in the second, according to official results. Over 61 million of Iran's more than 85 million people were eligible to vote. However, the hardliners' apparent status as a minority in Iran does not give much hope to all those who hope for change. "The Guards are still powerful. They have thousands of forces ready to fight to keep this regime in place. We, the people, have nothing," said Babak, 34, a businessman in Arak who asked to keep his family name secret. REUTERS

NYT

People at a rally to mourn the death of supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei in Tehran last week

Saudi Arabia, Pak discuss steps to jointly fight back attacks from Iran

Pakistan said it's discussed with Saudi Arabia joint measures they could take to halt Iranian drone and missile strikes on the kingdom, a first test of the mutual defence pact between the two countries. Pakistan's military said Saturday its army chief Asim Munir met Saudi's defence minister Khalid bin Salman in Saudi Arabia to discuss the regional security. Pakistan's foreign minister Ishaq Dar also spoke with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi Saturday, according to the foreign office.

Saudi Arabia and Pakistan signed the pact in Sept last year, stating that "any aggression against either country shall be considered an aggression against both."

Pakistan's military said Saturday that Munir and Khalid agreed that "unprovoked aggression undermines regional stability and foreclose options for a peaceful settlement of disputes." The assurances from Pakistan suggests it could be dragged into the conflict. Pakistan's Shia population—the largest in the world after Iran and Iraq—share strong ties with Iran. BLOOMBERG

Malaysia Airlines MH370's latest search yields no result: Agency

The latest search for Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 has produced no new clues about the aircraft's location, according to the country's Air Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB). Ocean Infinity surveyed about 7,571 square kilometres of seabed in the southern Indian Ocean in two phases, it said in a statement on Sunday. The second phase of the search concluded on Jan 23.

Malaysian govt signed a "no find, no fee" agreement with Ocean Infinity in 2025 to locate the wreckage of flight MH370 in a new area estimated at about 15,000 square kilometres in the southern Indian Ocean.

Flight MH370 departed from Kuala Lumpur on March 8, 2014, with an intended destination of Beijing. However, it lost contact with air traffic control less than an hour after take off, when the plane was over the South China Sea, and was never seen again. All 227 passengers and 12 crew members are presumed dead. Govt remains committed to keeping the affected families informed, AAIB said. BLOOMBERG

Concerned over Pentagon deal, OpenAI hardware leader resigns

Caitlin Kalinowski, who oversaw hardware at OpenAI, announced her resignation on Saturday, citing concerns about the company's agreement with the US' department of defence.

In a social media post, Kalinowski wrote that OpenAI did not take enough time before agreeing to deploy its AI models on the Pentagon's classified cloud networks. "AI has an important role in national security," she posted. "But surveillance of Americans without judicial oversight and lethal autonomy without human authorisation are lines that deserved more deliberation than they got." Kalinowski said that the company announced the Pentagon deal "without the guardrails defined," she posted. "It's a governance concern first and foremost," Kalinowski wrote in a subsequent X post. "These are too important for deals or announcements to be rushed."

OpenAI said the day after the deal was struck that it includes additional safeguards to protect its use cases. The company on Saturday reiterated that its "red lines" preclude use of its technology in domestic surveillance. REUTERS

CHAMPION STUFF!

HIGH RISK, HIGH REWARD: HOW 'TOTAL T20' FUELLED INDIA'S MARCH TO WORLD CUP GLORY

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Rinus Michels, the coach and manager of Ajax and the great Dutch football team of the 1970s, tore football's tactical textbook to shreds and came up with *Totaalvoetbal*, translated to English as 'Total Football'. It liberated players from fixed, traditional roles of attacker, mid-fielder and defender, allowing players to search for space and employ the high press. Defenders attacked and attackers defended. Captain Johan Cryuff embraced the idea, took it to Ajax and Barcelona as manager, and today we have Pep Guardiola at Man City still employing it with minor tweaks of his own. The 1974 Dutch team is often called as the greatest team never to win the football World Cup. But it created a dynasty and left a legacy.

Since their heady triumph in the USA and West Indies in June 2024 under Rohit Sharma and coach Rahul Dravid, India's cricket team has been playing their own version of 'Total T20' in the game's most popular and marketable format. They have managed to create an intimidation factor almost similar to what Ricky Ponting's great Australian team did in 2003 and 2007 as they won both World Cups unbeaten. Ponting's team also pocketed two ICC Champions Trophy crowns in the same period.

Whenever India took the field in the T20 World Cup, rivals wondered, "Where is the weakness?". India had attacking openers, a team packed with fearsome hitting potential till No. 8 and a bowling lineup with variety. Of course, South Africa found some chinks in India's armour and beat them in the Super-8 clash in Ahmedabad. England too came close to hunting down a seemingly impossible target of 254 in their semifinal in Mumbai, although eventually the scoreboard pressure turned out to be too much.

India, since the 2024 T20 World Cup, have won eight bilateral T20I series on the bounce. Since captain Suryakumar Yadav and head coach Gautam Gambhir took over, they have won seven series. India's last defeat in a T20I series was in Aug 2023 against the West Indies, away from home. No one remembers it. Want to jog your memory back? Hardik Pandya was the Indian captain. He was supposed to be Rohit's heir apparent after the 10-wicket drubbing in Adelaide to England in the 2022 T20 WC semifinal.

Transitions have often been thorny in the Indian cricket ecosystem, especially when the team has had to move on from legends like Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli. However, in the T20I set-up, India's transition was seamless.

The selectors and Gambhir quickly anointed 'SKY' as the T20I skipper, overlooking Hardik on the grounds of poor fitness and limited availability. They communicated to 'SKY' that he will be looked at purely as a T20I player and he would have no further role to play in the other formats.

Next, the batting template of high risk and high reward was set. India aggressively started searching for personnel who could help the team post above-par scores while batting first. The approach, especially on batting-friendly surfaces, yielded results as variables like toss and dew often had the cushion of huge scores. Players like Sanju Samson and Abhishek Sharma were empowered with spot security despite a string of low scores.

In 13 matches after June 29, 2024, the date of the T20 World Cup final, India have posted 200-plus batting first. They have scored 250-plus five times. Abandoning the safety-first Powerplay approach, the settling-in period was minimised or even banished. The anchor's role was binned and impact was prioritised over landmarks. Hence, you had Samson going for a big one on 89 in the semifinal and final, perishing instead of pushing for a single and trying to get closer to a milestone. Maybe he would have wasted precious deliveries in the bargain. Had he played for his century, would the cameos of Tilak Varma and Hardik Pandya have been possible?

Gambhir has publicly stated that data is overrated. However, the former opener relies on data to orchestrate match-ups and employ flexibility in the batting order to achieve the goal of over-par totals.

Spinners started bowling in powerplays and certain batters were held back, only to be unleashed on certain types of bowlers. Designated spin hitters like Shivam Dube got a consistent role. Eight batters and six bowlers became the mantra as Gambhir and 'SKY' prioritised 'multi-dimensional' players, often blurring the line between specialists and allrounders to ensure India always batted deep. If that meant keeping potent bowlers like Arshdeep Singh and Kuldeep Yadav out because of their batting inabilities, so be it.

To hell with social media chatter. The message was clear: batting won't be compromised, since that allowed batters to go harder even if they lost wickets.

Barring an all-format generational superstar like Jasprit Bumrah, 'SKY' and Gambhir's 'Mission 2026' squad was a classic T20 set-up, with specialised players. Samson, Abhishek, 'SKY' himself, Tilak, Rinku Singh, Hardik, Axar Patel, Shivam Dube, Arshdeep, Varun Chakravarthy. These are players who are unapologetic about yearning for T20 success or basking in the riches that its franchise avatar offers. They do not mouth platitudes like "Test cricket is real cricket". Nor do they voice ambitions of wanting to play 100 Tests or scoring 10,000 Test runs. They are happy with a two-year "immortality" cycle.

The triumph on Sunday has enabled India to create a new T20 dynasty, at least for the next two years if not more.

Pix: AFP, Reuters

THE INDOMITABLES: Abhishek (from left), Axar, Sanju and Rinku form the hungry, confident pack that headlines Suryakumar Yadav's team

QUICK WORK: Axar Patel (far left) claimed Finn Allen and Ishan Kishan (below) snapped up Rachin Ravindra in the final vs NZ

PILLARS OF THE T20 DYNASTY

KEY INFLECTION POINTS FOR THE INDIAN TEAM FROM 2024-26...

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After breaking a decade-long title drought with the 2024 T20 World Cup win, India went all in with a modern, aggressive T20 identity. After veterans like Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja stepped away, the think-tank designed a younger, braver side in which roles rather than reputations held sway. The subsequent two-year stretch was marked by inflection points in leadership, selection and tactics. **TOI** decodes what went into India's transition from a powerhouse of individuals to a relentless T20-winning machine...

MOVING ON FROM HARDIK PANDYA AS CAPTAINCY OPTION

Hardik Pandya was long considered the heir apparent to the T20 throne but the shift away from his leadership was a strategic pivot towards stability. One, his fitness was dodgy. Secondly, freeing him up from captaincy duties allowed him to grow into the role of the side's primary allrounder. This allowed India's most valuable allround asset to stay physically and mentally fresh for high-pressure situations.

APPOINTING SURYAKUMAR AS T20-ONLY CAPTAIN

Handing the T20 captaincy to Suryakumar Yadav, a one-format player, was a bold strategic move. It marked a clear shift toward format specialisation, ensuring leadership continuity in the shortest format. Known for his fearless batting and innovative mindset, Surya embodied the modern T20 philosophy India wanted to adopt. His leadership emphasised intent, aggressive Powerplay batting and tactical flexibility with bowling changes. Wit his appointment, India created a structure where decisions were driven purely by T20 demands.

DROPPING SHUBMAN GILL FOR INTENT-BASED SELECTION

Shubman Gill's exclusion was perhaps the loudest statement of the new era. Despite his technical brilliance and ODI dominance, his 'classical' approach was deemed too conservative. The management prioritised strike-rates over averages. By moving on from Gill, India sent a clear message that pedigree alone wouldn't guarantee a spot. This paved the way for a more explosive, though volatile, top order in the form of Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson and Ishan Kishan.

BACKING SANJU SAMSON AS ROHIT'S REPLACEMENT

Replacing a titan like Rohit Sharma was no small feat but Sanju Samson's like-for-like elevation worked wonders. While initially facing familiar 'inconsistency' labels, the batter delivered just when it mattered most, justifying the management's decision to stick by him through the lean patches. Reintroducing him as a primary aggressor during the World Cup provided India with a 'keeper-batter who could exploit the Powerplay better than most. His ability to hit good balls for boundaries changed the team's offensive baseline, turning him from a backup option into the indispensable tactical heartbeat.

MAINTAINING LEFT-RIGHT BATTING COMBINATIONS

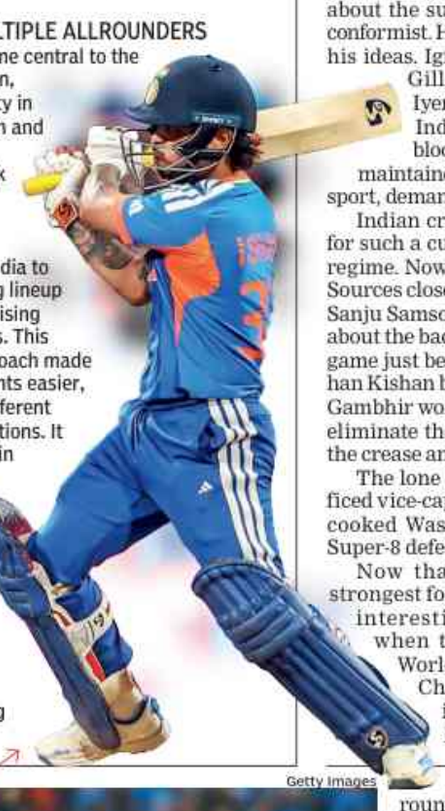
One of the tactical commitments from India was to maintain the left-right combinations throughout the batting order. Pairings such as Abhishek Sharma with Sanju Samson at the top, followed by **Ishan Kishan** and **Suryakumar Yadav** ensured bowlers rarely settled into rhythm. Later partnerships involving Shivam Dube and Hardik Pandya continued the pattern. The constant change of angles disrupted field placements and bowling plans. By structuring the lineup around alternating batting hands, India added a tactical layer that increased scoring opportunities and forced opponents to continuously adjust match-ups.

BACKING SPECIALIST FINISHERS

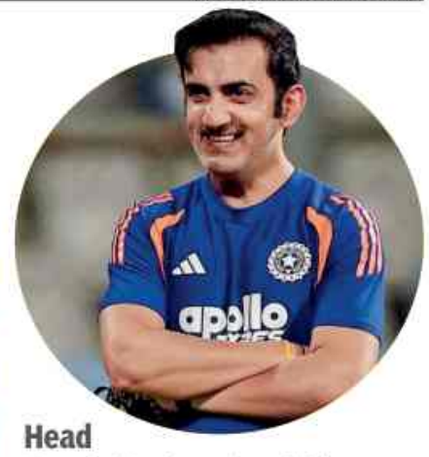
India placed greater emphasis on specialist finishers rather than relying solely on top-order dominance. Players like Shivam Dube and Rinku Singh were groomed for clearly defined late-overs roles. Their job was not to anchor the innings but to maximise scoring in the final five overs against pace and spin alike. This shift recognised a key modern T20 reality that games are often decided in the final phase.

INCLUDING MULTIPLE ALLROUNDERS

Allrounders became central to the squad composition, providing flexibility in both batting depth and bowling options. Players like Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel and Washington Sundar allowed India to extend the batting lineup without compromising bowling resources. This multi-skilled approach made tactical adjustments easier, particularly on different pitches and conditions. It also helped captain Suryakumar to react dynamically to match situations, ensuring that the side maintained balance even while fielding aggressive batting combinations.



Getty Images



Head Coach Gautam Gambhir Showed India How To Tame The Fickle Nature Of T20 & Stay One Step Ahead...

FIRM WITH IDEAS, FLEXIBLE WITH TACTICS

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"We are a gun team." These were Gautam Gambhir's first words to a young and inexperienced Test team under greenhorn captain Shubman Gill in England last summer. That one sentence killed doubts in the dressing room as the team went on to tie the five-Test series 2-2.

Barring the high in England, Gambhir's Test record as head coach has been abysmal. This T20 World Cup win, however, is another reminder that he has owned the T20 format since he took charge in July 2024. His past experience in franchise cricket and his power of conviction keeps him and his team a step ahead of everybody else in this format.

That India are now the undisputed power centre of T20 cricket has much to do with the proliferation of the IPL. Gambhir the coach too is a product of the IPL. Two strong seasons with Lucknow Super Giants, followed by a title-winning season with Kolkata Knight Riders, sprung him to the Team India post vacated by Rahul Dravid.

'Transition' was the buzzword when he took over. For Gambhir, though, it was never about forming a concrete template. He didn't mind making wholesome changes to the T20 team which had just lifted a trophy in Barbados. His approach may seem regimented at the outset but he always leaves enough room for taking calls on the fly.

Gambhir, unfailingly, invokes the "playing-for-140 crore-Indians" rhetoric in his media briefings. Form over reputation has been the underlining principle. Captain Suryakumar Yadav has been the sole exemption because Gambhir believes in having a person leading the team on the field who aligns with his thought process.

Gambhir's calls have often bordered on the whimsical. He wears his non-populist decisions like a crest. But then, that's what the fickle nature of T20 demands. In hindsight, one may argue he is too consumed by this process. It works spectacularly well in T20s but may prevent him from maintaining the continuity demanded by the longer formats.

Whether India need to split the think-tank across formats is still a debate but Gambhir has made his displeasure known about the suggestion. He is a proud non-conformist. He got the selectors to align with his ideas. Ignoring the likes of Shubman Gill, Rishabh Pant and Shreyas Iyer, the biggest young brands of Indian cricket, have been cold-blooded calls. Gambhir has always maintained that T20 cricket is a different sport, demanding unique skills.

Indian cricket didn't seem to be ready for such a cultural shift at the start of his regime. Now, it has embraced the change. Sources close to the team management say Sanju Samson was given a strong message about the bad habits that had crept into his game just before the T20 World Cup. As Ishan Kishan bloomed at the top of the order, Gambhir worked overtime with Samson to eliminate the exaggerated shuffle deep in the crease and stabilise the batter's stance.

The lone blunder came when he sacrificed vice-captain Axar Patel for an undercooked Washington Sundar during the Super-8 defeat to South Africa.

Now that he has delivered in his strongest format as a tactician, it will be interesting to see how he reboots when the focus shifts to the ODI World Cup in 2027 and World Test Championship. Will he be flexible enough to plan for the longer formats?

The Rohit playbook Surya keeps in his pocket

SKY's Predecessor Set The Template For The Current Team's Transformative Mindset...

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In the run-up to this T20 World Cup, Suryakumar Yadav was asked about the all-attack approach he had instilled in the T20 team. India were on an impressive winning run and the question perhaps begged itself. But the captain immediately contradicted the journalist.

"It's true that we are playing that form of cricket, but it's not me who started it," he said. "We started playing this brand of cricket under Rohit," Surya said, explaining how deeply indebted the team was to its former captain, under whom Surya has played both for India and Mumbai Indians.

It is the mindset change that Rohit, working in tandem with then coach Rahul Dravid, first brought to this team that has made them such a powerhouse in T20 cricket today. We need to go back and understand how the change happened.

India, after a brilliant initiation to the T20 format with the inaugural World Cup win under MS Dhoni in 2007, had slowly settled into a style that was getting outdated. Though the team was always competitive through the 2010s, the fact that Dhoni — and later Virat Kohli's team — didn't win a World Cup indicated something was going wrong.

The point of inflection probably came in the 2022 World Cup in Australia when India lost by 10 wickets to England in the semifinal in Adelaide. Rohit-led India had put up 168 on that day, a target which England galloped to in 16 overs.

After that harsh defeat, Rohit understood that something had to change. That's when he decided to bring in a complete change of approach to T20 cricket. It started with the opening partnership itself and Rohit took it upon himself to launch an attack right from the beginning. Up until then, 50 runs were more than acceptable in the Powerplay.

Taking a cue from teams like Australia and England, Rohit figured that the envelope needed to be pushed and 75 was something that India should target in the first six overs. It didn't matter to him if a couple of wickets fell in the process. The idea was to take the battle to the opposition right from the word go.

Rohit showed the world how it could be done during the 2024 World Cup in St Lucia, when his 41-ball 92 didn't just help India thrash Australia but sent them home from the Super Six stage.

To have that no-fear approach, there was a sacrifice that Rohit had to make. No could no longer go in with four specialist bowlers. It had to be three and they were backed up by three (or four) allrounders. In 2024, it was Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Shivam Dube and Hardik Pandya who were backing up Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh and Kuldeep Yadav, the three bowlers.

This meant that while batters could bat with a sense of freedom secure in the knowledge that there is cover till No. 8, the specialist bowlers had to take more responsibility.

It, of course, helped that India found Jasprit Bumrah at the peak of his powers. The unconventional pacer, who hardly goes for more than 25 in his four overs, invariably gave India the extra cushion to work with. Post 2024, as Rohit, Virat Kohli and Jadeja retired and Surya took over, he started taking this philosophy to the next level.

Of course, it helped that he got a coach in Gautam Gambhir who too believes in a similar philosophy. Surya decided that Abhishek Sharma was his No. 1 opener. It was after an IPL game where he was the Man of the Match that Abhishek said, "Surya-*bhai* keeps telling me to go on playing like this. He follows my game closely, which gives me a lot of confidence."

While Abhishek was up and down in this World Cup, India's lineup — with eight batters — never took a backward step. Sanju Samson, who found his spot in the XI in the latter stages, came in with the same mindset. Even though Samson had failed in a number of games before he got his chance against Zimbabwe in Chennai, the team management ensured that he didn't change his batting style.

It was this fearlessness flowing down the order that helped India get scores of 256-4 and 253-7 in the two must-win games against Zimbabwe and England and chase down 199 against the West Indies.

The approach had its costs, putting extreme pressure on the all-rounders, especially with mystery spinner C Varun losing his rhythm. But Surya, just like Rohit before him, knew that with Jasprit Bumrah in his arsenal, he could afford that risk. The fact was that Hardik found his mojo, Arshdeep was dependable and Axar delivered just when it mattered. All of it mattered in the end.

With the defeat to South Africa, there were questions whether the philosophy was faulty. But Surya was adamant and stuck with an idea that he had seen working, both as a player and captain. The conviction had a lot to do with what he learnt from his predecessor Rohit.

"In sports, wins and losses keep happening. Everybody works hard, sometimes, it works and sometimes it doesn't. I have learnt this from Rohit that in life, being balanced is important. I have never seen his character change, through good or bad times," Surya pointed out, in an emphatic hat-tip to his master.

It is this clarity of thought that did the job for India the last time, and it is the same playbook that hey fell back on now, to become undisputed kings of the T20 universe.

HAT-TIP: Suryakumar (right) openly credits Rohit Sharma for sparking the impetus that has made India a powerhouse in T20Is

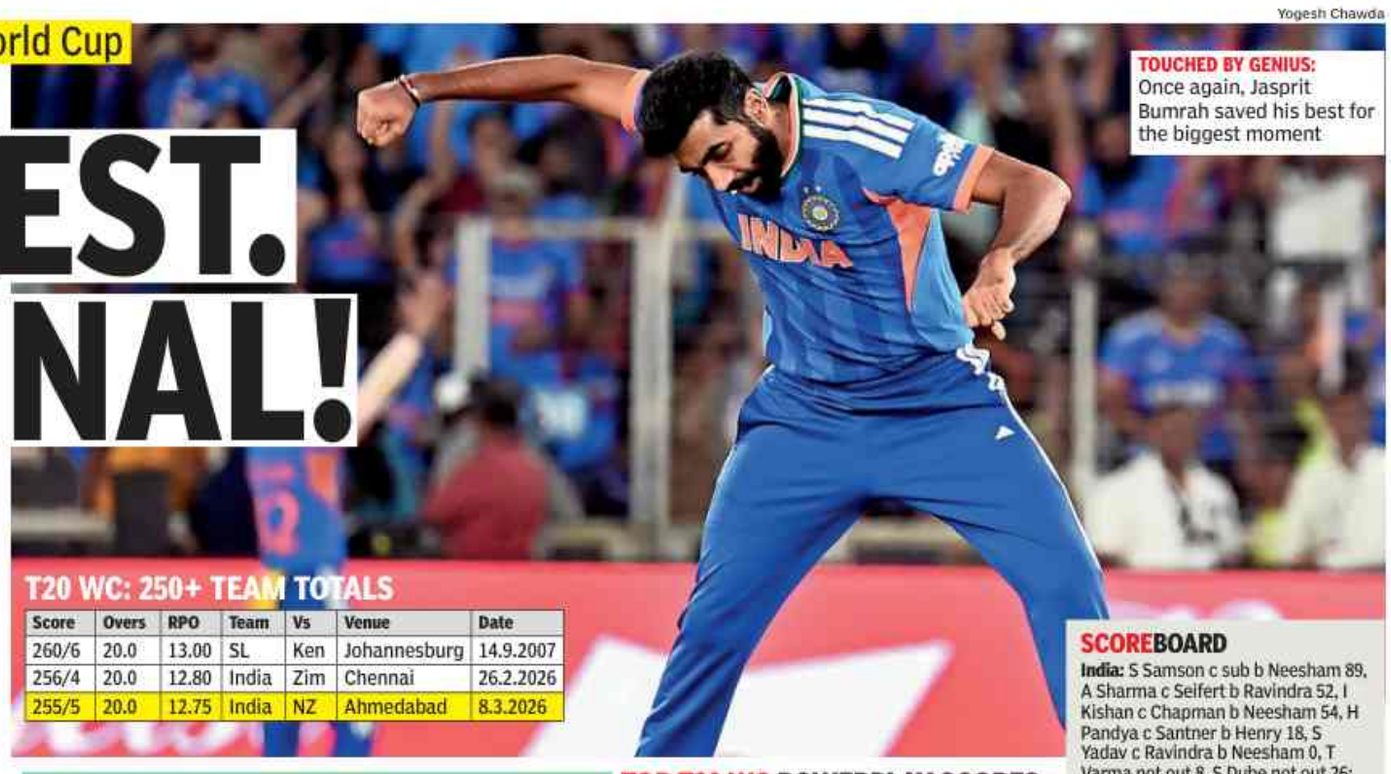
SKODA

Some drives win matches.
Some win hearts.

TIMES SPORT
THE TIMES OF INDIA, BENGALURU | MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2026

Invincible India Dismantle Kiwis, Retain World Cup Crown With An Era-Defining Performance

T20'S FINEST. THAT'S FINAL!



Yogesh Chawda

TOUCHED BY GENIUS: Once again, Jasprit Bumrah saved his best for the biggest moment

Gaurav.Gupta@timesofindia.com

Ahmedabad: Finals are meant to be tense, gripping affairs. This one turned into a procession. Riding on Sanju Samson's blazing knock and the Jasprit Bumrah's four-wicket haul, India shoved New Zealand aside to clinch their third T20 World Cup title — and second in a row — in a one-sided final at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Sunday night.

The defining win cemented India's position as the numero uno T20 team of our age. Some would say New Zealand never really turned up for the final, such was India's dominance! Continuing his fairytale comeback, Samson smashed a dazzling 89 off 46 balls (8x4, 5x6) as India piled up a mammoth 255/5, the highest total ever in a T20 World Cup final, after New Zealand — in just one of many bizarre tactical decisions on the day — opted to field first.

In reply, the Black Caps barely mounted a fight as they folded tamely, getting bowled out for 159, with Jasprit Bumrah leading the charge with four wickets and Axar Patel (3/27) providing able support. The 96-run victory margin told the story of the final. The only resistance came from opener Tim Seifert, who hammered a quickfire 52 off 26 balls (2x5, 5x6), while the rest of the Kiwi batting looked overawed by the occasion and the mammoth crowd.

For India, the tone was set by the one batsman who has struggled all through the tournament. Shrugging off his horror run, Abhishek Sharma rediscovered his destructive touch just when India needed it most.

The left-hander hammered the fastest fifty of the tournament, reaching the milestone in just 18 balls before finishing with a blistering 52 off 21 balls (6x4, 3x6).

India's most explosive opening pair went hammer and tongs at the Kiwi attack, racing to 92 without loss in the Powerplay, a start rarely seen in a T20 World Cup final. The duo added 98 in just 43 balls, dismantling some ordinary New Zealand pace bowling.

It was another night of fearless batting from India, a template they have followed since the Super-8 clash against Zimbabwe. After smashing 19 sixes in the semifinal against England, they cleared the ropes 18 times in the final, much to the delight of the 86,824-strong crowd.

New Zealand's tactics backfired badly. The decision to drop off-spinner Cole McConchie, who had struck in the semifinal, allowed Abhishek to flourish against the quicks. His replacement Jacob Duffy proved expensive, conceding 42 runs in three overs. The Kiwis' over-reliance on slower balls also proved costly, with spearhead Matt Henry leaking 49 runs in four overs. Surprisingly, off-spinner Glenn Phillips was given just a single over.

After Abhishek's dismissal, Ishan Kishan kept the momentum going with a brisk 54 off 25 balls (4x4, 4x6). His 105-run stand with Samson off just 48 balls for the second wicket pushed India to 203 in 15 overs, setting up a final onslaught. After them, Shivam Dube ensured the momentum never dipped with an eight-ball 26.

1 India have become the first team to successfully defend a T20 WC title, win 3 T20 World Cups and win the title at home.

96 India's winning margin is the biggest by any team in terms of runs in T20 WC knockout games, eclipsing WI's 74-run win in the semis vs Australia in 2012. —**Stats:** Rajesh Kumar

T20 WC: 250+ TEAM TOTALS

Score	Overs	RPO	Team	Vs	Venue	Date
260/6	20.0	13.00	SL	Ken	Johannesburg	14.9.2007
256/4	20.0	12.80	India	Zim	Chennai	26.2.2026
255/5	20.0	12.75	India	NZ	Ahmedabad	8.3.2026

The chase ends, but a good drive continues in a Škoda.

TOP T20 WC POWERPLAY SCORES

Score	For	Vs	Venue	Date
92/0	India	NZ	Ahmedabad	8-3-2026
92/1	WI	Afg	Gros Islet	17-6-2024
91/1	Ned	Ire	Sylhet	21-3-2014
89/3	Eng	SA	Mumbai	18-3-2016
86/1	India	Nam	Delhi	12-2-2026

1 India became the first team to register 250+ plus scores both in the semifinal and the final of the T20 WC — 253/7 vs England on March 5 and 255/5 vs New Zealand on March 8.

1 For the first time in the history of the T20 WC, the top three batters posted 50+ in the same innings — Sanju Samson (89), Abhishek Sharma (52) and Ishan Kishan (54).

SCOREBOARD

India: S Samson c sub b Neesham 89, A Sharma c Seifert b Ravindra 52, I Kishan c Chapman b Neesham 54, H Pandya c Santner b Henry 18, S Yadav c Ravindra b Neesham 0, T Varma not out 8, S Dube not out 26; **Extras (w8) 8; Total (5 wkts) 255; FoW:** 1-98, 2-203, 3-204, 4-204, 5-226; **Bowling:** Henry 4-0-49-1, Phillips 1-0-5-0, Duffy 3-0-42-0, Ferguson 2-0-48-0, Santner 4-0-33-0, Ravindra 2-0-32-1, Neesham 4-0-46-3.

New Zealand: T Seifert c I Kishan b Varun 52, F Allen c T Varma b Patel 9, R Ravindra c I Kishan b Bumrah 1, G Phillips b Patel 5, M Chapman b Pandya 3, D Mitchell c I Kishan b Patel 17, M Santner b Bumrah 43, J Neesham b Bumrah 8, M Henry b Bumrah 0, L Ferguson not out 6, J Duffy c T Varma b Abhishek 3, **Extras: (b4, lb1, w7) 12; Total: (19 overs) 159; FoW:** 1-31, 2-32, 3-47, 4-70, 5-72, 6-124, 7-141, 8-141, 9-152; **Bowling:** Arshdeep 4-0-32-0, Pandya 4-0-36-1, Patel 3-0-27-3, Bumrah 4-0-15-4, Chakravarthy 3-0-39-1, Abhishek 1-0-5-1.

Result: India won by 96 runs.
Player of the match: Jasprit Bumrah
Player of the series: Sanju Samson

TURNING POINTS

NZ's selections, decision to chase
Winning the toss on a flat Ahmedabad wicket, NZ chose to chase in a high-pressure final. The move to leave out off-spinner Cole McConchie, despite India's left-heavy top order struggling against off-spin, was puzzling.

India's Powerplay blitz
Abhishek Sharma and Sanju Samson dismantled the Kiwi pace attack, hammering 24 runs off Lockie Ferguson (4th over), 21 off Matt Henry (5th over) and 20 off Jacob Duffy (6th). The 92-run Powerplay — highest ever in T20 World Cups — set the tone.

Abhishek comes good
The off-colour Abhishek Sharma, on the biggest stage, produced fearless strokeplay, racing to the fastest fifty (off 18 balls) of the tournament.

Tactical error with Glenn Phillips
The off-spinner bowled a tidy over early, conceding just five runs. Surprisingly, New Zealand never used him again.

Dube's final-over assault
Facing Neesham, Shivam Dube unleashed a stunning late assault which yielded 24 runs. The late burst turned an already-daunting total into an overwhelming one.

NZ batters stumble in Powerplay
Axar Patel and Jasprit Bumrah dismantled the top order early. Those breakthroughs ensured New Zealand could never build any sort of momentum.

—Text: **Hindol Basu**

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SNAP SHOTS

Aditi ends T-3

Aditi Ashok dropped three bogeys in a row in the middle of the round but still managed to hold on for an even par 72 that helped her finish tied-third in the Blue Bay LPGA in Hainan Island, China. This was Aditi's best finish since her T2 at the JM Eagle LA Championship in 2023.

Diksha finishes T-5: Diksha Dagar logged her first top-5 finish of the 2026 season, finishing a creditable tied-fifth in the Australian Women's Classic after carding a 1-under 71 despite two bogeys in the middle of the round, in Magenta Shores, Australia on Saturday. On a brutal day when conditions were very tough, Diksha was one of only three players to go under-par on Sunday. Pranavi Urs, who had also been looking set for a Top-5 finish slipped in the final round as she shot 6-over 78, and finished sole 14th.

Sharma moves to tied 54th: India's Shubhankar Sharma produced a stable third round and was placed tied 54th after just about squeezing through to make the cut at the Joburg Open 2026 in Johannesburg. Sharma carded 1-under 69 in the third round.

Lahiri signs off at 24th spot: In a tame finish, Indian golfer Anirban Lahiri returned a card of 69 to end up tied-24th in Liv Golf Hong Kong, in Hong Kong on Saturday. Lahiri, who carded 66-65 at the Par-70 course on the first two days had 70 and 69 on the last two days for a 10-under total.

Joyshree, Ambekar & Sahil win: The Indian youth boxing team made a strong start to its campaign at the World Boxing Futures Cup 2026 in Bangkok on Sunday, with Joyshree Devi Chirom, Ambekar Meetei Lairenlakpam and Sahil Duhan registering victories. In the women's 54kg category, Joyshree secured a Referee Stopped Contest (RSC) victory in the second round against her opponent from Tajikistan. In the men's division, Ambekar (50kg) and Duhan (60kg) also began their campaigns on a winning note, both recording 5-0 unanimous decision victories over opponents from the Philippines and China respectively.

Lohakare claims gold: The spotlight was on two young javelin throwers — Shivam Lohakare and Anand Singh — on the final day of the Indian Open Throws Competition in Patiala on Sunday. Lohakare won the men's javelin throw gold with a distance of 81.08m. Anand, representing SSCB, took home silver (76.94m), while Odisha's Asian Games medallist, Kishore Kumar Jena, claimed bronze (74.75m).

One N Only best for feature

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Hyderabad: D Netto-trained One N Only is expected to win the Attract-ress Plate, the main event of opening day's races to be held here on Monday. First race starts at 3.30 pm.

1. Bhupalpally Plate 1200M: Turiya 1, Equine Power 2, American Gangster 3
2. Republic Plate 1200M: Lifes Journey 1, Knight Crusader 2,, Crimson Flame 3

HORSE RACING

3. Astonish Plate 1100M: Dubai Touch 1, Star Of Opera 2, Brillant Lad 3
4. Suryapet Plate 1400M: Golden Bourbon 1, Tupac 2, Genie 3
5. Zoom Zoom Plate 1100M: Super Splash 1, Gacchammanasvin 2, Wing Castle 3
6. Attractress Plate 1200M: One N Only 1, Diablo 2, Vivaldo 3
7. Red Satin Plate 1400M: Term Deposit 1, One Nation 2, Nkalanzinzi 3
Day's best: One N Only
1st Jackpot: 2, 3, 4, 6 & 7; **1st Treble:** 2, 3, & 4.

ZAYYAN PREVAILS
Zayyan — from the stables of Pesi Shroff — and ridden by G Vivek, won the Rajpipla Trophy, the feature of the Mumbai races on Sunday.

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ANOTHER NEAR MISS FOR LAKSHYA

Lin Triumphs As Half-Fit Indian Youngster Runs Out Of Steam In Title Tie

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It was so near for Lakshya Sen, yet again. Half-fit, he did all that he could. But his body failed him in Sunday's title clash of the All England Championship in Birmingham. In a 57-minute contest, marked by high-speed rallies and relentless attacking play, he lost 15-21, 20-22 to Lin Chun-Yi of Chinese Taipei.

AP

TOUGH FIGHT: India's Lakshya Sen in action on Sunday

ALL ENGLAND C'SHIP

Playing his second All England final after finishing runner-up in 2022, the 24-year-old Indian seemed to have made good recovery after Saturday's sapping semi-final win over Victor Lai of Canada, but the blisters on his right foot clearly hampered his movement.

His inability to dive on the right flank was cleverly exploited by his left-handed opponent and it was clear the Indian was soon running on empty — the after effects of spending a total of five hours, 18 minutes on court during the tournament. As his mentor Vimal Kumar had said before the match, Lakshya was 100% mentally strong but his body was only 60% fit.

Lakshya was gutted. "I'm pretty emotional right now to think about the match," he said later, "It was a good match. In the first set, he was a better player. I could have finished the second set better. But I am happy with the way I played the whole week."

"My physical condition was not ideal, but to be honest, when I was playing, I did not think about anything but to give my best on the court. Yesterday, I was struggling with cramps. Though I got some time to recover, I could not recover 100%," he added.

It was Lin all the way in the first set. The India Open champion started with a 1-4 lead and had a two-point advantage at the break (11-9).

Targeting Lakshya's right side, the southpaw from Taipei collected several points after the break. He extended the lead to 15-10 with the help of some power-packed cross-court smashes to Lakshya's forehand.

Though Lakshya reduced the margin to 13-16, Lin pulled ahead to 19-14. Lin's plan was simple. Move Lakshya all over the court during every rally and go in for the kill once the Indian tired. Lakshya showed glimpses of a comeback in the second game. He hit some brilliant smashes, executed some breath-taking drops to lead for the first time in the match.

When Lakshya widened the gap to 8-4, Lin looked edgy and made some unforced errors as the Indian advanced to 10-5. But the Taipei shuttler recovered in time and regained the momentum to catch up with the Indian at 14-14. Thereafter, it was too close to call.

At 18-18, Lin played a brilliant round-the-head shot, Lakshya responded with a smash to make it 19-19. Lakshya saved a match point at 19-20 but at 20-21, he misread a return and hit the shuttle wide.

Lin became the first Chinese Taipei shuttler to win the All England singles title. It was a little after compatriots Ye Hong Wei and Nicole Gonzales Chan became the first unseeded duo to bag the All England mixed doubles crown.

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ICC postpones Doha meeting: The International Cricket Council's (ICC) three-day meet from March 25 to 27 in Doha, Qatar has been postponed to next month in the wake of the ongoing West Asia conflict. PTI

Barca move 4 points clear

Bilbao: Barcelona's **Lamine Yamal** struck a superb second-half winner to earn his side a hard-fought 1-0 victory at Athletic Bilbao on Saturday, leaving the champions four points clear of Real Madrid at the top of La Liga.

Barcelona top the standings with 67 points after 27 games ahead of second-placed Real Madrid while Athletic are ninth with 35 points.

FOOTBALL

MAN CITY REACH QF
Manchester City shrugged off 10 changes to their starting lineup to crush Newcastle 3-1 and reach the FA Cup quarter-finals as Chelsea battled past 10-man Wrexham. **Select results: Spanish league:** Atletico Madrid 3 (Sorloth 5, Gonzalez 67, 81) bt Real Sociedad 2 (Soler 9, Oyarzabal 68); Athletic Bilbao 0 lost to Barcelona 1 (Yamal 68). **German league:** Cologne 1 (Kaminski 88) lost to Borussia Dortmund 2 (Guirassy 16, Beier 60). **Italian league:** Cagliari 1 (Esposito 56) lost to Como 2 (Baturina 14, Da Cunha 76); Atalanta 2 (Scamacca 75, 79) drew with Udinese 2 (Kristensen 40, Davis 55); Juventus 4 (Cambiaso 54, Thuram 65, Yildiz 75, Boga 90+3) bt Pisa 0. AGENCIES

India slump to 10-wkt loss

Perth: Australia translated their dominance over the last three days into a lop-sided 10-wicket win over India in the one-off women's day-night Test here on Sunday.

Australia earlier did the ground work for their victory, bowling out India for 149 in their second innings, and then scaled down a nominal target of 25 without any ado.

Getty Images

FITTING END: Alyssa Healy

WOMEN'S CRICKET

It was also a fitting farewell for skipper Alyssa Healy, who ended her career in Baggy Green with a magnificent win over a rival against whom she always excelled.

Writing was very much on the wall once India started the third day at 105 for six. Overnight India batters Pratika Rawal (63) and Sneh Rana (30) took India to 132. Rawal showed excellent temperament during her fifty but the task was way too tall for her to manage. Once Rana was ousted by Ash Gardener with a quick delivery taking out the batter's off-stump, India combusted quickly.

A combination of Gardner and Annabel Sutherland fittingly ended India's innings. Sutherland took a fine tumbling catch at the edge of the circle when Rawal's mistimed pull off the off-spinner failed to find power or distance. It also signalled the end of India's second innings. Australia openers Georgia Voll and Phoebe Litchfield were never going to be challenged by a target of 25, and the pair did the job with ease in just 4.3 overs.

"We started well in T20Is with a series win, but could not continue the good work in ODIs and Tests," said India skipper Harmanpreet Kaur said after the match. Her Australian counterpart Healy said: "Bouncing back from the T20 series defeat was unbelievable and proud of the bunch. "I am going to sing that team song one last time, but happy to see this team going forward and get some good results. The last week or so has been amazing," said Healy.

Brief scores: India: 198 & 149 all out in 48.2 overs (Pratika Rawal 63, Sneha Rana 30; Lucy Hamilton 3-32, Annabel Sutherland 2-15, Alana King 2-23, Ashleigh Gardner 2-8) **lost to Australia: 323 & 28 for no loss in 4.3 overs**. PTI

Vaishnavi edges Ankita for title

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

India's Vaishnavi Adkar lifted the singles title at the ITF W35 Kalaburagi with a determined 7-6(3), 6-4 victory over compatriot Ankita Raina in the final on Sunday.

Vaishnavi produced a composed display in a closely contested finale, earning 35 WTA ranking points and $4,860 in prize money. The 33-year-old Ankita received $2,637 and 23 ranking points. "It was a very good week for me. Conditions were very tough, and I feel proud that I was able to push till the last match in these conditions," the youngster from Pune said after her victory.

ITF W35 KALABURAGI

Vaishnavi started strongly, breaking early for a 2-0 lead, but Ankita recovered to level the set at 2-2. Momentum continued to swing as both players traded breaks and held serve in tight games, forcing a tie-break after they stayed locked at 6-6.

In the breaker, consecutive errors from Ankita helped Vaishnavi race to a 3-0 lead before extending the advantage to 5-1 with confident shot-making. Ankita narrowed the gap to 6-3, but Vaishnavi closed out the set 7-6(3) with a strong serve. The second set also witnessed early momentum shifts as Ankita broke in the opening game, only for Vaishnavi to break back immediately. Vaishnavi's backhand returns proved decisive in the sixth game as she broke again to move 4-2 ahead.

CHAMPION: Vaishnavi Adkar

The 21-year-old then held serve for 5-4 and capitalised on a couple of errors in the next game to earn three break points, converting one to seal the set 6-4 and the championship.

Result: 3-Vaishnavi Adkar bt 8-Ankita Raina 7-6(3), 6-4.

India blank Uruguay

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Hyderabad: Hosts India began their campaign in the FIH women's hockey World Cup qualifiers with a resounding 4-0 victory over lowly Uruguay at the Gachibowli Stadium, here on Sunday.

The hosts rode on goals from **Sunelita Toppo** (21st minute), Ishika (40), Lalremsiami (49) and Ruguja Dadaso (58). In other matches, England defeated Italy 5-2, while Korea edged past Austria 1-0 and Scotland defeated Wales by a solitary goal.

HOCKEY

Indian chief coach Sjoerd Marijnes said the team needs to perform better going forward. "There were some nerves since it was the first match and we committed some basic mistakes. We want to avoid those. That said, the youngsters did well and we are happy with the result." The hosts, ranked ninth in the world, will next face Scotland on Monday.

Earlier, England, the top-ranked team in the tournament, defeated Italy, riding on a brace from Grace Balsdon.

Results: India 4 (Sunelita Toppo 21, Ishika 40, Lalremsiami 49, Ruguja Dadaso 58) **bt Uruguay 0. England 5** (Grace Balsdon 12, 32, Lottie Bingham 15, Elizabeth Neal 16, Anna Toman 27) **bt Italy 2** (Ivanna Pessina 19, Federica Carta 46). **Korea 1** (Seona Kim 34) **bt Austria 0. Scotland 1** (Castello Amy 20) **bt Wales 0.**

Russell clinches close opener

Melbourne: Mercedes driver **George Russell** struck the first blow in the Formula One championship as he claimed an emphatic victory in the season-opening Australian Grand Prix ahead of teammate Kimi Antonelli and crushed an early challenge from Ferrari on Sunday.

Having dominated qualifying, pole-sitter Russell's first win at Albert Park confirmed Mercedes' pre-season form while giving the team their first Melbourne victory since Valtteri Bottas in 2019. "I like this car, I like this engine, great job," Russell said over the team radio.

Profiting from an early change of tyres, the Briton finished nearly three seconds ahead of Italian Antonelli, with Ferrari's third-placed Charles Leclerc more than 15 seconds adrift after his team's tyre strategy failed. It was a tough day for McLaren, with home hero Oscar Piastri's race over before it began with a crash during a reconnaissance lap some 40 minutes before the start.

FORMULA ONE

His teammate and defending champion Lando Norris finished fifth, one place behind the Ferrari of seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton -- but over 50 seconds after Russell crossed.

Four-times world champion Max Verstappen was sixth for Red Bull after starting 20th on the grid following a crash in Saturday's qualifying. His teammate Isack Hadjar suffered an early retirement. Russell engaged in a thrilling early duel with Leclerc, the pair swapping the lead seven times in the opening nine laps. "It was a hell of a fight at the beginning," said Russell.

There was ultimately daylight between Mercedes and the rest, with Hadjar's retirement the turning point. His Red Bull car stopped on lap 12 with smoke billowing out of the rear and triggered a virtual safety car.

Mercedes called both their drivers in to pit, swapping out medium tyres for hard compounds and they rode them for the final 45 laps without issue. REUTERS

Chethan Shivakumar

CUP OF JOY: South Western Railway, Mysuru players celebrate their win at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru on Sunday

SWR retain crown

Bengaluru: South Western Railway (SWR), Mysuru, clinched the Mathru Cup state-level women's basketball tournament title with a 63-37 win over Beagles BC in the final at the Sree Kanteerava Indoor Stadium on Sunday. The winners took home a cash prize of Rs 1 lakh, while the runners-up received Rs 70,000.

The defending champions were dominant throughout the competition despite fielding just five players. Their sixth member, Surya Darshini, had suffered a leg injury before the 12th edition and could only watch from the bench during the final.

BASKETBALL

"We won all our matches in the competition, and to play with five players and win the title is a solid effort. Many of our players are internationals and their experience counted," said SWR coach Zarin Somaiah.

Bhandavya HM led the scoring with 16 points and made an immediate impact, opening the scoring with a three-pointer. Beagles' key player Sanjana Ramesh responded with a three of her own, but SWR quickly took control to build a 26-11 lead at the end of the first quarter.

Two successive three-pointers from Chandana Shekar helped Beagles reduce the deficit to 17-26 in the second quarter. However, SWR's speed on the fast break and dominance in the paint saw them extend their lead to 44-27 by half-time.

Holding a comfortable 17-point cushion, SWR eased the tempo in the third quarter. Beagles failed to capitalise on the opportunity, with Sanjana's two free throws — part of her 17-point tally — being the only notable contribution.

The final quarter proved to be a mere formality as SWR comfortably sealed the title. **Result: Final**: SWR, Mysuru: 63 (Bhandhavya 16, Sathya 13) bt Beagles BC: 37 (Sanjana 17 Chandana 10) HT: 44-27; 3rd place: DYES, Mysuru: 60 (Mandara 15 Rakshitha 12) bt Mounts Club: 40 (Nidhi Umesh 13 Avni 10) HT: 37- 21. **Player of the tournament:** Swathi (Beagles); **Most promising player:** Mandhara (DYES, Mysuru). TNN

One triumph, many heroes

India's 2nd successive victory in the T20 World Cup was built on team effort. **TOI** takes you back through the journey of the Men-In-Blue from the first game to the semifinal

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SURYA'S RESCUE ACT VS THE USA

The hosts were given a rude awakening in their opening encounter against the USA at Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai. Still, on a pitch where shot-making was difficult, skipper Suryakumar Yadav's unbeaten 49-ball 84 (10x4, 4x6) proved to be the difference as India prevailed by 29 runs.

Brief scores: India 161/9 (S Yadav 84*, T Varma 25; S van Schalkwyk 4-25) beat USA 132/8 (S Krishnamurthi 37; Mohammad Siraj 3-29, Axar Patel 2-24).

KISHAN, PANDYA FLAY NAMIBIA

At the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi, as Ishan Kishan set the tone with a blazing 24-ball 61 (6x4, 5x6). After a mid-innings wobble, Hardik Pandya built on the early momentum to hit a sublime 52 (28 balls, 4x4, 4x6) to propel India to 209/9. He then returned to hasten Namibia's end by claiming two wickets as India won by 93 runs.

Brief scores: India 209/9 (I Kishan 61, Pandya 52; G Erasmus 4/20) beat Namibia 116 (L Steenkamp 29, V Chakravarthy 3/7, Axar 2-20, Hardik 2-21).

SENSATIONAL KISHAN FLOORS PAK

Ishan Kishan rose above the slow, spin-friendly conditions at the R Premadasa Stadium in Colombo with a career-defining knock against their arch-rivals. On a pitch where Pakistan bowled 18 overs of spin, Kishan swept, reverse-swept and cut them to size as he smashed his way to an unbeaten 40-ball 77 (10x4, 3x6) to steer India to 175/7. Pakistan surrendered in their chase, getting bowled out for 114.

Brief scores: India 175/7 (I Kishan 77, Suryakumar 32; S Ayub 3-25) beat Pakistan 114 (U Khan 44, Pandya 2-16, Bumrah 2-17).

> "Good things happen to good people who wait. It's the hard work he's been doing when he was not playing."
> —Suryakumar Yadav on Sanju Samson

DUBE DESTROYS THE DUTCH

Shivam Dube hit a 31-ball 66 and claiming two wickets to fashion India's 17-run win over Netherlands at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. The southpaw smashed four fours and six sixes in his career-best knock and then accounted for the prize wicket of the Netherlands' top-scorer, Bas de Leede. The Dutch batters failed to read Varun Chakravarthy's (3/14) mystery spin and were never really in the chase.

Brief scores: India 193/6 (S Dube 66, Suryakumar 34, van Beek 3-56) beat Netherlands 176/7 (de Leede 33, V Chakravarthy 3-14, S Dube 2-35).

INDIA LOSE THE PLOT AGAINST SA

Jasprit Bumrah (3/15) gave the hosts the upper hand against South Africa with a double strike in the powerplay to reduce them to 20/3. Though Arshdeep Singh (2/28) complemented his new-ball partner's efforts, the rest of the bowlers were hit by David Miller (63), Dewald Brevis (45) and Tristan Stubbs (44*) as Proteas made 187/7. India's batting line-up capitualted and were bundled out for 111 to end India's 12-match unbeaten run in T20 World Cups.

Brief scores: South Africa 187/7 (D Miller 63, D Brevis 45, J Bumrah 3/15) beat India 111 (S Dube 42; Marco Jansen 4/22).

INDIA FLEX BATTING MIGHT VS ZIM

In a must-win game, India rejigged their batting order and showed their might against Zimbabwe in Chennai. All six batters who came to the crease not only crossed double figures but also had a strike rate in excess of 158 as India galloped to 256/4, aided by blistering fifties from Abhishek Sharma (55 off 30 balls, 4x4, 4x6) and Hardik Pandya (50* off 23 balls, 2x4, 4x6). Zimbabwe could only manage 184/6. as India kept their dream alive.

Brief scores: India 256/4 (A Sharma 55, H Pandya 50*; Sikandar Raza 1-29) beat Zimbabwe 184/6 in 20 overs (B Bennett 97*, Sikandar Raza 31; Arshdeep Singh 3-24).

SANJU STEERS INDIA INTO THE SEMIS

Sanju Samson repaid the faith shown in him by the team management with a high-quality knock to seal India's semi-final berth with a five-wicket win over West Indies in a virtual quarterfinal at the Eden Gardens, Kolkata. Jasprit Bumrah played his part with the ball with a double strike in the 12th over to restrict a rampaging Windies to 195/4 on a flat Eden track. Unfazed by the stiff target, Sanju played a measured knock and always looked in control of the chase as he produced some classy strokes to take India home with an unbeaten 97 from 50 balls (12x4, 4x6).

Brief scores: India 199/5 in 19.2 overs (S Samson 97, T Varma 27; Jason Holder 2-38) beat West Indies 195/4 (Roston Chase 40, Jason Holder 37*; Jasprit Bumrah 2-36).

BUMRAH, SANJU SEND ENG HOME

It required the scintillating strokeplay of Sanju Samson, the ingenuity of Jasprit Bumrah with the ball and the brilliance of Axar Patel in the field to defy Jacob Bethell's individual batting might in the second semifinal at the Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai. Sanju bludgeoned a 42-ball 89 (8x4, 7x6) to help India post an imposing 253/7. Axar Patel's stunning catch, running backwards to dismiss Brook, and his remarkable agility at the boundary ropes to relay a catch to Shivam Dube pegged England back in their chase. However, Bethell 105 (42b, 8x4, 7x6), kept the visitors in the hunt. But Bumrah proved to be the game-changer conceding just eight and six in his final two overs at the death.

Brief scores: India 253/7 (S Samson 89, S Dube 43; W Jacks 2-40) beat England 246/7 (J Bethell 105, W Jacks 35; H Pandya 2-38, J Bumrah 1-33).

AKAASH & SABEENA START FAVOURITES

Bengaluru: Defending champion **Akaash Ashok Kumar** from Karnataka and Tamil Nadu's veteran player, Sabeena Athica, will start as favourites at the national tenpin bowling championship, which gets underway here on Monday.

Apart from Akaash, the strong contenders for the trophy are the Delhi duo, SA Hameed and Dhruv Sarda (Delhi), along with home boy Kishan R. Former champion Shabbir Dhankot and women's defending champion Sumathi Nallabantu from Telangana have pulled out. Haryana's Anukriti Bishnoi and Preemal J from Karnataka are expected to give Sabeena a tough fight in the women's event. The tournament will feature 145 bowlers, including 120 men and 25 women from 19 states and union territories. **Karnataka team: Men:** Akaash Ashok Kumar, Kishan R, Parvez Ahmed, Vijay Punjabi, Shanmugananda, Surjeet Singh, AV Sathish, Kunal Jain, James Christy, Sahil Punjabi, Dhanush Reddy, Surendra Babu Kishan Cheranda, Manjunath Damodar, Prathyek Satya Channakesava J, Allen Richards, Manohar Hegde; **Women:** Preemal J, Hitasha Sisodiya, Geetha Poojary, Swathi Nayak TNN

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Just one woman among 33 judges in SC, CJI Surya Kant says equal share in judiciary remains unfinished task

SEE INSIDE FLAP

Thums Up

ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP INDIA & SRI LANKA 2026

THIS VICTORY TASTES LIKE THUNDER

Thums Up

ABHISHEK 4 BUMRAH 93 SKY 63 RINKU 35

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UK GIVING 'SERIOUS THOUGHT' TO SENDING 2 AIRCRAFT CARRIERS BUT DON'T NEED THESE TO WIN WAR AGAINST IRAN, SAYS TRUMP 15

'Arrogance will be shattered': Modi slams TMC on Prez row

MHA Seeks Report From Bengal Govt

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: PM Narendra Modi on Sunday stepped up his attack on the Mamata Banerjee-led West Bengal govt over alleged "mismanagement" of an event attended by President Droupadi Murmu, accusing TMC of insulting the head of state and warning that the governing party's "arrogance of power will soon be shattered".

Amid the political storm, the MHA sought a report from the Bengal govt on suspected violations of security and protocol norms during the President's visit. In a letter to chief secretary Nandini Chakraborty, Union home secretary Govind Mohan asked the state to submit a detailed explanation by 5pm on Sunday regarding alleged breaches of the 'Blue Book' guidelines governing venue, security and route arrangements.

The controversy has intensified the already sharp political confrontation between BJP and TMC ahead of assembly elections in West Bengal, with both sides accusing each other of politicising the President's visit and the tribal community event.

Addressing a gathering in Delhi's Burari, where he inaugurated development projects worth about Rs 33,500 crore, Modi said the developments surrounding the President's visit had "deeply hurt" him.

▶To Constitution, P 10

PM Narendra Modi rolled out projects worth Rs 33,500 crore in New Delhi on Sunday; (left) Union minister M L Khattar looks on

Mamata flags 'proof of who shows respect'

Kolkata: Bengal CM **Mamata Banerjee** dug out Sunday an undated picture of PM Modi seated and President Droupadi Murmu standing at an event, flagging it as "proof of who actually shows respect" while contesting his charge that TMC govt had "gravely insulted" the presidential chair with a protocol breach at Siliguri.

"Why were you sitting when she was standing?" Mamata said from her SIR protest dais. "We honour every person holding constitutional posts." TNN

▶Being singled out, P 10

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'Khamenei name will continue': Iran hints son will be his successor

Iran on Sunday indicated it had chosen Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's son Mojtaba as his successor, a week after the supreme leader was killed in the first wave of US-Israeli strikes on Feb 28.

"The name of Khamenei will continue," said Ayatollah Hosseinali Eshkevari, a member of the clerical council charged with electing a new leader, in a video published in Iranian media. "The vote has been cast and will be announced soon," he said.

Trump warned Sunday that a successor would not "last long" without his approval. He had earlier dismissed the younger Khamenei, seen as powerful in Tehran, as a "lightweight". AGENCIES

▶ Indian killed in Saudi Arabia's Al Kharj city, P 15
▶ Russia still top crude source for India, P 6

3 dead so far, advisory for Indian seafarers

India's maritime regulator has advised Indian seafarers onboard vessels in the Persian Gulf, Hormuz, Gulf of Oman and neighbouring waters to "maintain continuous vigilance". Three Indian seafarers have been reported killed in the war so far. The DG Shipping cited recent incidents, including trapping of two seafarers in accommodation area of a burning tanker. **P 6**

Tuskers, camels, cadre line up as Nitish's son Nishant joins JDU

Patna: Outgoing Bihar CM and JD(U) president Nitish Kumar's 50-year-old son Nishant Kumar, who had long stayed away from public life, entered active politics and joined the party Sunday after his father filed his Rajya Sabha nomination three days ago, **reports Madan Kumar**.

Crowds of party workers thronged the JD(U) headquarters in Patna, welcoming Nishant with garlands and a celebratory cavalcade of elephants, horses and camels.

▶Nishant's promise, P 10

Boys, aged 10 & 12, rape 9-yr-old girl in Hathras

A nine-year-old girl in a village in Utttar Pradesh's Hathras district last week was allegedly raped by two boys, aged 10 and 12 years, who had lured her to a field on the pretext of giving her berries. Police have detained the accused and produced them before a magistrate, who sent them to a juvenile home. **P 7**

I-T starts survey of 70 eateries across 45 cities

I-T sleuths on Sunday launched a pan-India survey of around 70 restaurants, including some in Delhi and Mumbai, to scan alleged billing software manipulation for suppression of sales and lower tax payments. The nationwide action followed an earlier crackdown in Telangana. **P 12**

Most women CEOs in FMCG, pharma

A survey by global search firm Executive Access shows the FMCG sector has the highest number of women CEOs, with a 19% share. Pharma follows with a 17% share. **FLAP INSIDE**

Final ward quota list out; women won't get 50% of seats in B'luru councils

Sanjay.Murty@timesofindia.com

Bengaluru: On the eve of International Women's Day, the Karnataka urban development department released the final ward reservation list for Bengaluru's five new municipal corporations. But the notification has revealed a shortfall in one of the key mandates of urban governance: Half the seats for women.

Across the 369 wards in five corporations of Greater Bengaluru Authority, only 176 seats have been reserved for women. The number falls nine short of the 50% mark.

The final notification, which was expected by Feb 19, was issued late Saturday. Officials said the delay was due to processing of objections and suggestions received after the draft quota list was published in Jan. The final figures remain unchanged despite criticism that the draft itself failed to meet the statutory quota.

▶Five corporations, P 3

GBA to raise ₹1k-cr via municipal bonds

GBA is preparing to revive municipal bonds as a financing tool for Bengaluru infrastructure, with plans to mobilise ₹1,000 crore, **reports Hamsaveni N.** The city civic agency was among the first urban bodies in India to issue municipal bonds in 1997. **P 3**

Boy attacks 8 classmates in Ballari; 1 dead

Ballari: A Class 9 student died and seven others sustained injuries when a classmate went on an attacking spree with an iron rod after a minor spat broke out at a private residential school here Saturday night, cops said. Two of the victims are critical.

The attack took place at the hostel attached to an international school. The deceased, Hemanth, was from Adoni in Andhra. All the students involved were studying in Class 9. Police said the accused minor, now absconding, allegedly assaulted his classmates following a dispute after dinner. The attack was suspected to have taken place while the victims were asleep in the hostel. TNN

▶Question safety, P 3

Interstellar, Einstein, and the Strange Elasticity of Time

Meera Jain

In Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar*, astronauts land on a planet orbiting close to a black hole. They spend a few hours on its surface. When they return to their spacecraft, they discover that 23 years have passed on Earth. Children have grown up. A lifetime has slipped away.

It feels like science fiction, but it's not fantasy. Einstein's theory of relativity showed that time is not absolute. It slows down when you move close to the speed of light. It also slows down in strong gravitational fields. The closer you are to a massive object, like a black hole, the more spacetime curves, and the slower time passes for you compared to someone farther away.

Atomic clocks on fast-moving aircraft tick slightly slower than identical clocks on the ground. GPS satellites must constantly adjust for relativistic effects. Without those corrections, our navigation systems would drift by kilometres each day.

Gravity bends time. The universe does not run on a single master clock. And yet, concepts like the "fourth dimension" or "time relativity" are often dismissed as abstract science fiction ideas.

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But a generational shift is quietly taking place. We're moving from merely thinking about these ideas, to feeling their reality, to living in them. "Tesseract" is inspired by my 12-year-old grandson, whom we watched become completely absorbed in *Interstellar*. Hans Zimmer's haunting organ theme became his favourite piece to play on the piano, and again and again, he returned to it.

The music itself feels like time unfolding. Slow, expansive, layered, almost architectural. It rises and circles back, like something moving through dimensions we cannot see.

One evening, our conversation drifted to the film's most mind-bending idea: the tesseract—a four-dimensional hypercube. In the movie, time is represented as a physical dimension, something you can move through, like space.

To explain it, he reached for paper. Through simple folds of origami, he showed how a two-dimensional square can be unfolded into a three-dimensional cube. Then he asked: if a cube can unfold into something beyond itself, why not imagine a four-dimensional version, a hypercube, unfolding in ways our eyes cannot fully perceive?

It was curiosity in motion, a physics lecture from my grandson, who teaches me something new every time I meet him, without fail.

For many adults, such ideas still feel abstract. But younger generations are growing up immersed in them, through films, games, simulations, science channels and digital visualisations. They are comfortable imagining spacetime as fabric, dimensions beyond the visible, universes bending under gravity. And perhaps more importantly, they intuitively grasp something about relativity long before they encounter equations.

▶Continued on page 7

Gender balance in judiciary remains unfinished task: CJI

Only 116 Of 781 Judges In 25 HCs Are Women

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New Delhi: With just one out of 33 judges in SC and around 15% of judges in HCs being women, CJI **Surya Kant**, on International Women's Day, admitted that their fair and equal participation in the judiciary remained an unfinished task and appealed to HC collegiums to consider elevation of more women to the bench.

Of the total working strength of 781 judges in 25 HCs, the number of women judges is only 116. Over the years, 291 women judges had been appointed in HCs out of a total appointment of 5,161, which makes it a meagre 5.6%. No woman judge has been appointed to SC since Sept 2021.

Speaking on "Half the Nation, Half the Bench" at an event on SC premises, the CJI said women judges do not bring a different standard of justice but they do bring in a distinct perspective, and diversity. He said the institution must rise to address the concern of 650 million females in the country and make them believe the justice system understands the realities and would respond to them with fairness. He said institutional intent is not enough and should be accompanied by institutional imagination to realise the goal.

"HC collegiums must recognise that the moment for measured action is not in the future, it is now... when suitable and meritorious women members are available at the Bar, then their consideration should not be an exception but a norm," the CJI said.

He underscored the need to widen the zone of consideration for judicial appointments and urged HCs not to reject candidates merely because they do not strictly meet the age requirement. "Where in certain HCs, if suitable women candidates within a particular age limit are not immediately available, that should not become a barrier," he said.

Justice Kant said the concern of enough women representation was being addressed, but more was needed. He said at present, two HCs have women chief justices, and with the elevation of Justice Lisa Gill, the number will rise to three. He mentioned Punjab and Haryana HC, which has 18 sitting women judges.

"Every woman who takes a place on the bench sends a clear message to those who still face obstacle that your perseverance is not unseen and it is not in vain," he said.

Govt lacks intent to achieve gender parity in SC & HCs: Ex-CJI

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New Delhi: In a startling disclosure on International Women's Day, former CJI **N V Ramana** on Sunday said govt lacked the intent or determination towards achieving gender parity in constitutional courts, even though there is a healthy (40%) representation by women among trial court judges.

Speaking at a Q&A session during the first national conference of 'Indian Women in Law' at the Supreme Court complex, Justice Ramana, who faced numerous pulls and pressures during his tenure as the CJI from April 2021 to Aug 2022, said, "Govt always showed a causal attitude in appointments of women (as judges of SC and high courts)."

During his tenure as CJI and head of the collegium, three women judges — Justices Hima Kohli, Bela M Trivedi and B V Nagarathna — took oath on Aug 31, 2021, and created history. No other woman judge has been appointed to SC since then.

Justice Nagarathna will become the first woman CJI on Sept 24 next year. Speaking in her presence, Ramana said there are two future CJIs in this gathering (referring to Justice Nagarathna and and her successor Justice P S Narasimha) and hoped during their tenure at least 7-8 women judges will be appointed to SC.

Explaining what he meant by lack of intent on govt's part, Justice Ramana said though successive law ministers had routinely requested HC chief justices to recommend names of women advocates and judicial officers for appointment as HC judges, "govt has never strongly insisted on effective representation of women in each and every recommendation."

Ramana said it would be unfair to lay the blame entirely at govt's door for skewed representation of women in the judiciary. "Judiciary must respond with sincerity towards inclusivity as there is no dearth of talented women lawyers who can be HC judges," he said.

FMCG and pharma emerge as new strongholds for women CEOs

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New Delhi: There was a time when some of India's leading banking and financial services firms had women at the helm, making these sectors a visible symbol of gender diversity. Today, that centre of gravity has shifted.

Consumer-facing industries and pharmaceuticals have emerged as the new strongholds for women CEOs, reflecting where long-standing leadership pipelines are now bearing fruit.

A survey by global search firm Executive Access, commissioned by **TOI**, shows the FMCG sector has the highest number of women CEOs, with a 19% share. Pharma, too, has built a strong management bench that is increasingly feeding into top leadership roles, and follows with a 17% share.

"Women are often known for strong intuitive decision-making — a quality that can be a major advantage in today's uncertain and unpredictable business environment. Equally important is the fact that consumer buying decisions are heavily influenced by them. As organisations recognise this, forward-looking sectors are likely to see the share of women in leadership roles rise by at least 25% by 2030," said Executive Access India MD, Ronesh Puri.

'25 SECTOR ALLOCATION

Current Year Portfolio Distribution	
Sector	Allocation (%)
Consumer Packaged Goods	19%
Pharma	17%
Start-ups	15%
New Energy	13%
Retail	11%
Technology	10%
AMC	8%
Insurance	8%
Automotive OEM	5%

Top women CEOs in the consumer space include Priya Nair (Hindustan Unilever), Prabha Narasimhan (Colgate-Palmolive India), and Geetika Mehta (Nivea India). In pharma, leaders such as Shweta Rai (Bayer), Meenakshi Nevatia (Pfizer), and Annapurna Das (Takeda) are among those at the helm of the Indian entities.

A few years ago, India's BFSI sector with leaders including Shikha Sharma (Axis Bank), Naina Lal Kidwai (HSBC), Zarin Daruwala (Standard Chartered), and Kalpana Morparia (JP Morgan), stood out as the most visible sector for women leadership.

Despite the progress, industry experts note structural and cultural barriers persist at workplaces. "There are still deep-rooted stereotypes that sectors such as infrastructure, capital goods, automobiles are better suited to male leaders. Companies need to actively encourage more women to enter these fields and support them through policies, mentorship and leadership development. The share of women in STEM also remains relatively small, which weakens the leadership pipeline. At the same time, macro issues like safety continue to be real barriers," said Emcure Pharmaceuticals executive director, Namita Thapar.

While terming it as the "broken rung" challenge, Achal Khanna, CEO, professional association SHRM (APAC & MENA), cited a 2026 India Inc Leadership Report, which estimated that nearly 30% of companies have seen stagnation or decline in women in senior roles over the last five years, largely because of many exits at the middle-management stage due to limited structural support and perceived unfairness in promotions. Fixing this bottleneck will be critical to building a stronger leadership pipeline.

"Beyond mentorship, what matters is sustained sponsorship, cultural change, and policies that support career continuity," said Vedanta Resources CEO, Deshnee Naidoo.

The picture is, however, dynamic and could evolve every year. Sectors that consciously promote gender-diverse talent and prioritise their growth over a period of time, are likely to stay ahead. While industries such as manufacturing, infrastructure, technology and logistics, where the pipeline remains thinner, lag.

Meanwhile, multinationals have a higher share of women CEOs as diversity has been embedded in their leadership agenda, the survey said. Indian companies have begun focusing on it only more recently suggesting a gap that may take five to 10 years to narrow.

I grew up in a family where women were bosses: Rahul

New Delhi: "I grew up in a family where women were the bosses," Congress' **Rahul Gandhi** told students during an interaction over lunch in Kerala, and mentioned, "the boss of my family was my grandmother and I have always in my family, like on this table, been outnumbered by women".

He added, "Women are generally more intelligent than men. Men are in a hurry and get blinded by silly things. Women think long term, and don't apply direct power, which is effective."

In a post, Rahul said, "I was deeply impressed by each student's dreams, curiosity, and confidence. Such conversations remind us that when women recognise their potential and move forward with an open mind, they can bring about extraordinary change."

He said, "Every woman is unique. Their sensitivity, understanding, and emotional intelligence provide balance and direction to society. Women wield power in their own unique ways — with patience, long-term vision, and empathy."

Meanwhile, Congress MP from Kerala, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, posted on X, "On this Women's Day, may every woman realise her strength..." TNN

Among 4,666 MPs & MLAs, only 464 women: ADR report

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New Delhi: Among 4,666 MPs/MLAs across country, only 464 or 10% are women, highlights a report on 'Women's political participation and representation in India' released by Association for Democratic Reforms to mark International Women's Day.

The analysis by ADR and National Election Watch shows that among the 543 MPs in the 18th Lok Sabha, 74 (14%) are women. As many as 22 states and UTs have women MPs.

Bengal has the highest number of women MPs (11), followed by UP and Maharashtra (7 each), and MP (6).

Among parties, BJP has the highest number of women MPs (31), followed by Congress (13), and TMC (11). The analysis reveals that only national parties and state parties managed to get their women candidates elected. No woman candidate from any unrecognised political party or Independent woman candidate won the polls.

Of the 4,123 MLAs across country, 390 (9%) are women. Among state and UT assemblies, UP has highest number of women MLAs (47), followed by Bengal (40), Bihar (29), and MP (27). BJP has the highest number of women MLAs (163), followed by Congress (59), and TMC (34).

On the status of women's participation in politics in India, the report highlights that over the decades, the number of women contesting elections has seen a remarkable rise. In the 1957 Lok Sabha polls, there were only 45 women candidates. During the 18th LS polls, this number had soared to 800, demonstrating an increasing willingness and opportunity for women to participate as political candidates.

Also, women's representation in legislative bodies has gradually improved. In Lok Sabha, the number of women representatives was 22 (5%) in 1951, which increased to 74 (14%) in 2024.

DISPARITY IN HOUSE

At the local level, women hold a more significant share of seats. In 2022, women comprised 44% of representatives in local self-govt institutions, with a total of 1,375,914 representatives.

Women's Reservation Bill 2023 was passed in Sept 2023. However, its implementation is slated after the census and delimitation exercise. In this backdrop, the report asserts that "the timely conduct of the census planned in 2026-27 is crucial to implementing this bill by 2029."

Murmu: Equal participation of women must for India's growth

New Delhi: On International Women's Day, President **Droupadi Murmu** said to achieve development in its true sense, "we must ensure equal participation of women, who constitute nearly half of the country's population".

She said though women are playing leading roles in every field and major efforts have made to empower them, many obstacles remain in their development journey. "For instance, even today, many women face problems such as discrimination, unequal pay for equal work, and domestic violence," she said.

PM Modi, posted on X, stressing empowerment of women is at core of govt initiatives. He shared a thread on milestones achieved and measures taken to empower women. "We remain committed to creating opportunities that enable women to realise their potential." —**Ambika Pandit**